

## Abstract

The military history of the 20th century cannot be imagined without secret wars, consisting of subversive operations, reconnaissance, sabotage, and guerrilla warfare. One of the representatives of this secret war - Ilya Grigoryevich Starinov - is a legendary saboteur, scout, partisan. Member of the Civil War, revolutionary events in Spain, Finnish and Great Patriotic Wars. Theorist and practitioner of guerrilla warfare. In the 30-40s of the last century, he personally developed and carried out a number of special operations, later included in the annals of the world's special services training manuals.

---

- [Ilya Starinov.](#)
- [PART I. MINES WAIT FOR THEIR HOUR](#)
  - [Chapter 1. On the eve of the](#)
  - [revolution Chapter](#)
  - [2. 1919 Chapter](#)
  - [3. 1921 Chapter](#)
  - [4. 1922 Chapter](#)
  - [5. Teachings Chapter 6. 1930 Guerrilla](#)
  - [school Chapter 7. Guerrilla warfare](#)
  - [strategy Chapter 8. 1934. Studying at](#)
  - [the Academy Chapter 9. Leningrad Railway Commandant's](#)
  - [Office Chapter 10. Party](#)
- [Purge PART II. WE ARE INTERNATIONALISTS](#)
  - [Chapter 1. 1936. By the call of the "Old](#)
  - [Man". Chapter 2. Across six](#)
  - [borders Chapter](#)
  - [3. Spain Chapter 4. The first students](#)
  - [in Spain Chapter 5. The first sorties](#)
  - [behind enemy](#)
  - [lines Chapter 6. 1937](#)
  - [Chapter 7. Near](#)
  - [Granada Chapter 8. Recognized! Chapter 9](#)

- Chapter 10. Near Madrid and Zaragoza. Anarcho-Trotsky  
putsch in \_\_\_\_\_
- Barcelona PART III. IF TOMORROW
  - WAR Chapter 1
  - Return Chapter 2. 1938. "Public  
Enemies". Chapter 3. On the
  - Karelian Isthmus Chapter 4. In the Main Military
  - Engineering Directorate Chapter 5. Tank designer Kotin
- PART IV. PASS INVISIBLE
  - Chapter 1. June 1941
  - Chapter 2. On the Moscow strategic
  - Chapter 3. "Cut the reptile!"
  - Chapter 4. The first
  - students Chapter 5.
  - New schools Chapter 6. "Operation  
Alberich. Remember?" Chapter 7
  - Find the way out. Be on time.
  - Chapter 8. Sappers are
  - the last to depart Chapter 9. Moscow is
  - behind us Chapter 10.. Two meetings. In Stalin's
  - waiting room Chapter 11. On the Southern Front. Mine "at  
night!"
  - Chapter 12. Front Commander
  - General Malinovsky Chapter 13. Through Ice and
  - Hummocks Chapter 14. Time of Hope. Engineer Gridnev "chemically" OZ  
chief
  - Chapter 16. Front commander Konev Chapter 17. As a brigade  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - commander at Konev Chapter 18. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Meetings in Moscow. Fights for the Rzhev ledge
  - Chapter 19. I'm leaving for
  - the partisans Chapter 20. In
  - a new position
  - Chapter 21. Changes
  - Chapter 22. In the
  - Caucasus Chapter 23. "Pasaremos!" Chapter 24  
\_\_\_\_\_

- [Chapter 25. Rail war](#)
  - [Chapter 26. Across the front line. Strokach refuses rail war!](#)
  - [Chapter 27](#)
  - [Saburov has Chapter 28. The beginning](#)
  - [of the Battle of Kursk. Guerrilla attacks on the enemy Chapter](#)
  - [29. The](#)
  - [truth about the legend](#)
  - [Chapter 30.](#)
  - [Dnieper Chapter 31. "Give me](#)
  - [explosives!" Chapter 32 "Ovruch corridor" Chapter](#)
  - [33. In the](#)
  - [detachments Chapter 34. Spring 1944](#)
-

## Ilya Starinov. Notes of a saboteur



Ilya Grigoryevich Starikov and the editors of the Vympel almanac thank the veterans of the Vympel special forces unit of the KGB of the USSR for their help in publishing the almanac. ... For many

years, after returning from combat, I run to Ilya Grigorievich to discuss the details of some of the special operations carried out and listen to his advice. So at the end of January 1995, completely excited by what I saw in Grozny, I came to "Grandfather". After carefully listening to my sad story, Ilya Grigorievich

remarked:

- If the Chechens had mastered the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare, the results would have been much more deplorable. The trouble is, our smug generals don't seem to have a clue about it either! It was then that Ilya Grigorievich had the idea to write this book. It is clear that while the war in Chechnya was going on, the book could not see the light of day. The manuscript was about 800 pages. So we decided to split it into two parts. We will try to release the first book by Victory Day, and the second by August 2, when Ilya Grigorievich turns 97 years old. Erkebek Abdulaev

I would like to express my special gratitude to Anara Abdulaeva and Irina Borodycheva, who assisted in the preparation of the manuscript.

# **PART I. MINES WAIT**

## Chapter 1. On the eve of the revolution

In 1916, dissatisfaction with the war was brewing in the country. Food shortages began. Prices were rising, even by a penny, but they were growing. Yes, and that penny is not like the current ruble. I failed my seventh grade exam that year, according to God's law. The people were mostly illiterate. Seven classes of education was very much. And where did you study? The nearest school was 30 miles away. A friend of mine recommended me to the Provincial Administration. I entered there, having withstood a competition for the vacant position of a clerk-registrar. My duties included registering incoming and outgoing documentation and being able to summarize the content of letters. Then another benefactor contributed to my transfer to the position of clerk at the Tver provincial government for supplying the army with shoes. This work was supervised by the marshal of the nobility Panafidin - a surprisingly efficient and educated person. So I worked until the October Revolution. I lived on Grabilovka street. But despite having lived here for three years, no one was robbed on our street. The February revolution broke out for me suddenly. An uprising of the workers of large enterprises began. The people took to the streets. The rebels killed the vice-governor, several gendarmes and, most importantly, burned the security department - the building where all counterintelligence documents were concentrated. Together with the curious public, I had a chance to go on excursions to the local prison and even dine there. They fed the prisoners at that time, I must say, not bad. After the October Revolution, Panafidin left. All leadership has fled. I stayed with five or six clerks in charge of office work. By 1918 I became the head of production. There was nationalization. It was carried out, I must say, quite politely. The old owners were offered the positions of technical managers. Workers were appointed directors. These manufacturers, as I saw, lived rather modestly. In most cases, they resigned themselves to their position. Those who did not reconcile, left or

participated in sabotage, but I saw few such cases. My work was going well. In June, the food situation did not improve, but instead of a twelve-hour working day, an eight-hour working day was introduced, holidays were introduced. Then the civil war began and I was drafted into the army. For a month, we were trained to penetrate unnoticed and remain invisible behind enemy lines.

## Chapter 2. 1919

August. Hot day. On the hilly plain south of the city of Korocha, Kursk province, black pillars of artillery explosions flare up every now and then. Machine guns are blaring. I am lying in a trench and I see how on the left, on the flank of the company, the fighters rise and run forward. It's time for our platoon! I lean on my left hand, pull myself up, jump up and, together with my comrades, also run forward. Sweat fills the eyes. The palms are fused with the rifle. - Urr ... Ah-ah-ah-ah! - rushes over

the field. Bullets screech. As if stumbling or bumping into an invisible wall, the neighbor falls. More to the ground! To snuggle up for a moment to the warm, dusty grass, where, as if nothing had happened, insects with polished wings crawl along the stems! Take a break, wait, so that in a minute, having deceived death, again rush towards explosions and machine guns! Our 20th Infantry Regiment is attacking Denikin. In front of the regiment's front - although selected, but already exhausted parts of the Markov division. A week ago, the Markovites beat us, and now the gentlemen of the officers are having a hard time. Shelled, filled with hatred, we rush forward. We fall into the abandoned by the enemy

trenches.

- Take up defense! .. Take up defense! .. - the order is transmitted along the chain. Only now I feel pain in my leg. He bent down - a blood stain spreads along the winding. It burns below the knee with fire: a fragment of a shell has stuck into the lower leg. In the evening we are replaced. Limping, I wander along with other fighters to the houses on the outskirts of Korocha. Here, on the floor of one of the huts, we sleep side by side until morning. Only my sleep is restless. In the wounded leg, something drills and pulls. At dawn, with difficulty lifting up my trouser leg, I see that the lower leg is swollen and inflamed. I try to get up. Where there! I nearly fall to the floor in pain. Dizzy. Multi-colored spots before the eyes. "Y-yes... Look at

you..." the detached one says anxiously. - We must go to the infirmary. They are taken to the infirmary. The carriage of the military hospital train smelled of iodoform, purulent wounds, gore. Groans, nonsense. We barely crawl from station to station. Under Yelets we barely fall into the paws



break through the front of the Cossacks of Mamontov. Those who can walk get out into the vestibules, push through to the windows, bonfire doctors and orderlies, demand that they be given weapons. But the train safely slips through the dangerous stage. Another day - and we are in Tula. There is a good hospital here, they will help me here! However, the faces of the doctors examining the leg are gloomy, impenetrable. They look at each other, exchange Latin words, and one pats him on the shoulder with

merciless tenderness: "Amputation is needed, dear. Above the knee. Do you agree? Amputation? Does that mean the leg will be cut off? At nineteen I won't be able to walk like all people? Will I become crippled? One of those who, like a bird, jumps on crutches, crawls along the pavements? No! I won't let you cut!

"Can't it be cured, doctor?" I ask desperately. The surgeon shrugs his shoulders: - A general

infection of the blood will begin - you will die .. - Well, let it be! Let it be!.. Why, maybe I'll still survive?.. In the ward, I'm lying face down, depressed and confused. How so? Tiny fragment - and suddenly cut off the whole leg. Do you have to agree?

- Well, show yourself! An elderly military paramedic, Ivan Sergeevich, is standing near the bunk. Throwing back a thin gray blanket, he carefully examines my right leg, already swollen like a log. Now he will scold, call him a savage for not listening to the doctor.

- Well done for not letting me amputate! - says Ivan Sergeevich. Is it gangrene? Let's cure! I don't believe my ears. And Ivan Sergeevich is already ordering the nurse to bring clean bandages.

- To reduce the heat, I will cover your leg with plantain, warrior! the paramedic consoles. - Although science does not favor this grandmother's remedy, it works correctly. Do not be sad! And Ivan Sergeevich treats me in his own way, often changing the bandage with a plantain compress. However, there seems to be nothing else, more radical, in the hospital. A young surgeon on rounds chuckles in disbelief, but does not scold the paramedic, trusting his great experience. And the miracle happens. The temperature begins to drop, the burning sensation in the lower leg gradually weakens. At night, in a sleepy ward, listening to the distant whistles of locomotives, I see my whole short life. The horns remind us of the booth where a year ago our large eight-member family lived, living from bag to matting. Is it for sixteen paternal rubles a month

feed such a mob? Everyone works in the house. We, the children, help our mother with the housework, graze the cow, the older ones spend the season on peat extraction. And even trips to the Shosha River, winding in the meadows behind the booth, even walks in the forest have very specific goals: to catch fish, collect mushrooms and berries, and pull up roots. It is not supposed to come empty-handed, and ashamed. But more expensive than any gifts and entertainment is the respect of the elders, the warm parental caress coming from the depths of the heart ... For hours I sat by the embankment, looking spellbound at the trains rushing past our booth. It seemed that there was no force in the world capable of restraining their frantic run. However, we kids knew: trains obey their father. If he comes out to the canvas with a red flag or a lantern, the most indomitable courier will obediently creak with brakes ... One blizzard night I woke up from the roar of explosions. It turned out that my father discovered a broken rail and, not hoping that the driver would notice a red signal, put firecrackers on the rails. They delayed the composition. This incident so struck the boyish imagination that for a long time my father seemed to me a man of fabulous strength. However, in adolescence, I understood something else: my father, and I, and my brothers, and thousands of the same simple people are pushed to the back of life, doomed to exhausting work, to illiteracy ... I was lucky. My youth coincided with a cleansing revolutionary storm. In October 1917, together with my factory friends, Misha Yagodkin and Kopey Medvedev, I joined the combat group created by the city Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. This group was instructed to detain the counter-revolutionary troops heading to Petrograd by rail. The group was commanded by an artilleryman who arrived from the front, the son-in-law of the switchman Vasily Grigoryevich Loshkarev. "Through acquaintance" I also got into this group together with Loshkarev's son Ivan - a very strong and modest working guy. The group was small, we did not have weapons, but still we were able to detain several trains with soldiers, blocking the paths with logs, disabling semaphores. I considered myself a happy person when I got into the active Red Army and received a weapon. Even the harsh baptism of fire did not cool my ardor. It so happened that in one of the first battles the regiment suffered heavy losses. To our surprise, in the morning, shooting began not from the side of the enemy, but in our rear and on our company

behind, from a tall sunflower, the White Guards jumped out. It turned out that we were bypassed. Due to the betrayal of one former tsarist officer, our company was almost completely captured by the Denikins. We were lined up in a column and led to the rear of Denikin's troops. On the way we met a squadron of cavalry. They demanded that red stars be carved on our backs. The guards didn't. Many got lashes. When it was already hot, we were taken to some village and placed in the school yard. I wanted to drink. The local peasants brought us water, bread, cucumbers and even a few finely chopped pieces of lard. The priest should talk to us, so that after the conversation, decide who for the expense, who for the mines, and who for the army. I and some others who did not have crosses on their chests did not smile at the meeting with the clergyman. Fortunately, he didn't come. For the night we were placed in one of the classes in the village school. It was the end of July, the night came late, there was no moon in the sky and it became completely dark. There were about fifty of us. Our platoon commander Semyon Ivanovich Rodin remained from the command staff. He was a communist, but he was not extradited. We were guarded by only seven soldiers. They were tired, lay down on the floor, and soon fell asleep, except for the one who paced outside and smoked a lot, and the other who sat down by the door. They gave us a bucket, it was soon filled, and there was a smell from it. Rodin, together with Androsov, asked permission to take the bucket to the outhouse, which was in the yard. The sentry woke up one of the sleeping soldiers, and he, taking a rifle, led Androsov out with a bucket. They returned safely. The soldier plopped down on the floor and soon fell asleep. Two hours later the bucket was full again. The sentry this time did not wake anyone up, but called his partner and he led us to the restroom. When we returned to the classroom, the White Guards guarding us were already standing without weapons. They begged them not to kill them and agreed to break through with us to the Reds, who, judging by the roar of artillery, did not retreat. As it turned out later. Rodin and Androsov attracted several more of their Red Army men and, while carrying out the bucket, they seized the moment and disarmed the sentry, and when we returned back, our escort did not even utter a peep when Androsov snatched his rifle from him. We decided to leave, breaking into three groups for reliability. I remained in my squad, commanded by a brave warrior. For the day we ca

A battle was going on nearby, and the next night we went out to the location of our troops, bringing two escorts. Two other groups went out to their own, and again to the front line. Agreed to fight against the whites and our former guards. Again battles, and again the encirclement in Korocho, occupied by the enemy. I managed to dive into one cellar, where I sat until night. I went out at night. Alone in a city occupied by enemies. Where to go and how? The first night I couldn't get out of the city and hid in an abandoned garden. The second day lay in nettles. A horse approached the nettle. She could draw people to my hideout. Taking a ramrod, I poked her in the face. She left. So I hid until the evening. After wandering all night, in the afternoon he went to the barn, in which he decided to pass another day. The barn was filled with good fragrant hay and oat straw. I fell asleep. Another night has come. It was time to leave, but the shed was locked. I managed to get out through the roof. He knocked on the window to the owner. He fed and helped to get out of the city. Only five days later, across the Koro-Chu River, he went out to his own. Even then, during my wanderings around Denikin's rear, I firmly grasped three truths: first, one must remain human behind enemy lines; the second never let go of the weapon; the third - the best ally behind the front line is the night ... I lay on my bed and smiled, and a bandaged neighbor looked askance at me, an extremely phlegmatic person, extremely laconic, but sharp-tongued - sapper Pyotr Pchelkin, nicknamed by the wounded for his fullness and slowness Bumblebee. No matter how silent Bumblebee was, it was impossible to lie side by side for a good three weeks and not talk about his army life. And Pchelkin told me about people who are strong, brave and savvy, who carry the heavy burden of battles on their shoulders, about people who create in the pitch hell of war, and if necessary, destroy what has been created in order to create again after victory. I heard about the fearless and desperate demolitionists sneaking behind white lines to destroy their railroads and bridges. Maybe Bumblebee did not speak very smoothly, but there was something in the clumsy words of the former peasant that excited me. Now I understand that Private Pyotr Pchelkin was a poet of his hard work. The harsh romance of his specialty lived in his soul. And then my fellow countryman Arkhip Tsarkov, the first dancer in all Voinovo, a merry fellow and a joker, appeared in the ward. He also turned out to be a sapper and unconditionally

I decided that we should part, if we had already met, not a trace. Shmel's exciting stories, Arkhip's fervent conviction, and natural reluctance to part with good comrades - all this played a role. Friends were discharged. I also asked for an extract. In part of the 9th Infantry Division, sappers were just being recruited. Although the wound had not yet healed, I refused to leave. Tsarkov, Pchelkin and I were enrolled in the 27th separate sapper company. Thus began my service in the engineering troops of the Red Army. The service that determined my whole future life.

## Chapter 3. 1921

Almost two years have passed. We were advancing. The battles went on with varying success. Fierce winds blew through the Arbat Spit. On the left is the Sea of Azov, on the right is the Rotten Sea. No buildings, no fuel. We walked one hundred and twenty kilometers, building fires from algae and tree fragments thrown ashore. Every sip of water counted. And finally they grappled with the enemy... The fate of the Wrangelites is known. We were thrown into Kerch to clear the catacombs of the last white gangs. And from Kerch along the ice of the strait in a cold January - to the Kuban. And from the Kuban - to Makhachkala. And from there - through Baku to Georgia ... There, as political workers said, the people and part of the army rebelled against the reactionary bourgeois government, which had sold out to the imperialists. However, stubborn battles unfolded in Tiflis, in which the commander of the division, Kuryshko, was killed. In the future, the Georgian army did not offer serious resistance. In the early spring of 1921, our 9th division reached the Black Sea in Batumi. The sectors of the fronts changed, the weather changed, the people around us changed, but one thing did not change - the native division, the native company. I have never regretted that I listened to my friends 14 went to the engineering units. It was hard, cool, bitter. But whatever happens, we keep moving forward. We were victorious!.. In June 1921 we were still standing in Batumi. The army was shrinking. I had a choice - demobilization or study at a military school. I didn't think. I could not imagine life outside the army. What could be more honorable and more important than serving the people in the Armed Forces of the Soviet Motherland? He asked to be sent to study. I received recommendations, testimonials, and soon went to Moscow, to the GUVUZ - the Main Directorate of Military Educational Institutions. Moscow I subsequently had a chance to read a lot about Moscow in the twenty-first year. Moscow really was dirty. Some boulevards looked like a flea market during the day, and at night - like a wasteland. Instead of shops there were distributors everywhere, where it was not known what was distributed and where

Homeless children roamed the squares in rags. Barter was going on on Sukharevka, every now and then a cry was heard: "Stop the thief!" But the city made a different, quite different impression on me and my comrades. The brightest hopes lived in our hearts, and everything around us did not seem gloomy at all then. Early in the morning we saw people rushing to factories and institutions, overcrowded trams. We not only believed, but knew: all misfortunes are a temporary phenomenon. The ancient walls of the Kremlin, behind which Vladimir Ilyich Lenin works, guarantee this! And of course, before going to the GUVUZ, we stood on Red Square, listened to the chiming clock, which had recently begun to play the "Internationale". The conversation at GUVUZ turned out to be short. They took our travel allowances, recommendations, certificates, gave out rations and sent us to Odessa to take exams at the military engineering school. The school got straight to the entrance exams. There were many who wanted to study, but I was not worried. In the upper elementary school, I was considered one of the first students. He did not like only to cram the law of God. But there is no God's law here, thank God. However, the competition did not pass. While in Odessa, Leon Trotsky arrived. The entire Odessa garrison was assembled on a parade ground not far from the engineering school. All the Red Army men were in white undershirts and underpants, belted with belts, in boots with windings and in Budyonovkas. It was an impressive sight! A small platform was built for Trotsky and his entourage. There were no amplifiers. There was silence, and Trotsky spoke very loudly and gesticulated frequently. His speech ended with a loud "Ur-ra a!". The way back to Moscow dragged on sadly. The commander who received me, shaking his head, delved into the questionnaire, as if he could read in it what to do. And read something! His worried face

softened.

— Listen! Why don't you go to military railroad technician school? After all, since childhood, you can say, a railway worker! My father's profession continued to determine my fate. I, the sapper, agreed. The School of Railway Technicians was located in Voronezh. Taught by bitter experience, I sat down for

Kiselev's algebra and geometry, repeated the entire course and passed the entrance exams with excellent marks. In September, they were enrolled as cadets.

- Congratulations, comrades! - said the head of the 4th Voronezh military engineering school to the cadets lined up on the parade ground. - From tomorrow - to work! .. The first thing was the preparation of firewood. Fuel was tight all over the country. Voronezh was no exception. Our school was located in a brick building. There was almost no glass in the windows, and window openings were clogged with boards, insulated with dry leaves and sawdust. If you didn't prepare firewood, they would freeze like flies in winter. Long winter nights, but to tired cadets they seem very short. The ration is scarce, and we still voluntarily deduct part of the food in favor of the starving people of the Volga region. Poor lighting. In those years there was a craze for communes. Communes arose in the Voronezh school of military railway technicians. Members of communes worked together, shared everything they had. In addition to me, our commune included Fyodor Pankratov and Alexander Azbukin, intelligent and energetic guys. We set a goal for ourselves: to pass as an external student in January 1922 for the second semester of the first year and for the first semester of the second. Complete a two-year school in a year. Some teachers doubted the success of such an enterprise, others supported us. There were no rest days. With incredible difficulty, we caught up with the second year and then made another decision: to finish our studies with excellent marks. And we got top marks in all subjects. All three were awarded nominal watches on the day of issue. Shortly before the transition to the second year, as a front-line soldier and an excellent student, I was accepted as a candidate member of the Communist Party. Needless to say, what joy and pride I felt!



## Chapter 4. 1922

Autumn. The school of military railway technicians is over. in the commune was assigned to Kyiv, the Red 4th Korostensky Our Banner Railway Regiment. I will not forget my new company commander Alexander Evdokimovich Kryukov, a participant in the First World War and the Civil War. Alexander Evdokimovich received me and my comrades as if they were his own sons. He took care of our housing, uniforms. And, most importantly, he did not emphasize his seniority in any way. The commander was demanding, but kept confidential, and this bribed, strengthened our respect for him. All three of us, members of the Voronezh commune, did not have command skills. It happened, therefore, that in the classroom with the Red Army, mistakes were made. Alexander Evdokimovich noticed each of them, but he never corrected us in front of the soldiers. Only after class did he point out mistakes in the most tactful way. And how grateful we were for that! Kryukov spared no time for instructing young commanders. In addition, he somehow immediately figured out the inclinations of everyone. Noticing, in particular, that I liked subversive work, he immediately tried to appoint me head of the subversive team. The study of demolition workers was combined with practice. Near cities and villages, a large number of unexploded shells were found buried in the ground. My subversive team has enough to do: we carefully dig out destructive finds, take them to deserted places and destroy them. I take every opportunity to investigate the arrangement of fuses. I am making the first experiments on melting explosives from shells and bombs, and I am convinced that this is a completely safe and profitable undertaking. And the need for trinitrotoluene is very great. Especially in the spring, when it is necessary to undermine the ice jams that threaten the railway bridges. Already at that time, I first thought about creating portable mines to undermine enemy echelons. Anything can happen in the future. Our mines should be simple, convenient, reliable, and the fuses for them should be trouble-free ... Back in the years of the civil war

I happened to get acquainted with the construction of bulky, complex delayed-action anti-train mines, which were then called "hell machines". The 9th Engineer Battalion had several of these mines. The sappers set up only one of them at the Bataysk Rostov site. The rest wasted through the entire civil war in a wagon train. No, the Red Army does not need such clumsy colossus! I begin to regularly read military magazines, study mine-exploding business, eagerly supplement the knowledge and experience gained in the war and at school. My comrades gnaw at the granite of science with the same tenacity. The entire Workers' and Peasants' Red Army is studying. The subversive team, in addition to training in the construction of obstacles during the withdrawal, was also trained in sabotage behind enemy lines: in case the troops were in the territory occupied by the enemy. The need for such training came from the installation of M.V. Frunze, who believed that the troops should be adapted to operations behind enemy lines too. This dramatically increases their combat capability. Life in the country is improving rapidly. The economy destroyed by two wars is being successfully revived. A new year, 1924, began. The policy of the Bolsheviks is triumphant. And suddenly a heavy grief falls on the party, on the people. On a frosty January day, news arrives that is scary to believe; Vladimir Ilyich Lenin died. The whistles of all locomotives and factories sob inconsolably. People freeze in the streets where their grief has overtaken them. What will happen to the party, the country, the people? - this question is in the eyes of everyone. And as if in response to him - Lenin's call to the party. Do you want the cause of Lenin not to die, that it should live, that the ideas of Leninism would transform the world? Join the ranks of the communists! With all you can, serve the party, give it your strength. They may not be great, but there are millions of people like you, and, therefore, your will and strength are irresistible!.. I was still a candidate member of the RCP(b). And just like thousands of others, in those days he applied for membership in the party. Even today I have not forgotten the excitement experienced in those moments when I stood under the strict, evaluating views of the communists of the regiment ... As the head of the subversive team, I also had to deal with the fight against saboteurs. They derailed trains and blew up railway bridges, planting improvised explosives based on bartholite salt, ammonium nitrate and gunpowder in the mine chambers and mine wells of the bridges.

We had to find an effective way to counteract, since we were not able to guard all the small bridges, and the enemy mainly mined them. What needs to be done in order to wean the enemy from laying mines? We started making booby traps. They were installed on unguarded objects and exploded at the entrance to the structures. One trap was enough to stun a man, but not kill him. Several of these traps weaned the bandits from mining our facilities. For this we received thanks from Yakir himself. Shortly after that, I was sent on a business trip. The destination and nature of the assignment were not determined. Another business trip In the service car, everything is cleared up. The commission chaired by E. K. Afonko, in which I am included, will work under the direct supervision of Comrade Yakir, Commander of the Ukrainian Military District. The work is connected with the strengthening of the border strip. We have to examine the railway sections on the borders with Poland and Romania, prepare them for destruction and mining in the event of a sudden enemy invasion. I am the only demolition commander on the commission. Suggestions are expected from me on the creation of advance mine devices. All this is very flattering, but very embarrassing. After all, who am I? Company commander, just a company commander, and even then a week without a year! Suddenly I can't do it? Gotta deal with it! The environment encourages this. The chairman of the commission is an extremely organized person. Skinhead, powerfully built, E. K. Afonko, even on the road, does not forget about daily exercises. But he has countless cases. The commission travels around the border areas to a depth of 250 kilometers. We inspect railway bridges, large pipes, depots, pumping stations, high water towers. embankments and deep cuts. From morning until late at night, in any weather, we walk along the sleepers, along the damp ballast. We estimate, we measure. And returning to the saloon car, we begin scrupulous calculations and calculations. The bitter smell of locomotive smoke was already firmly ingrained in his clothes. Gray overcoats do not dry overnight. A month has passed, the second one has ended, and our carriage is still wandering. Somehow in October we creep up to Mozyr station. Freezing in the morning. The wind cuts the face. Wow, it will not be fun to climb the supports and trusses of the bridge hunched over Pripyat! But apart from us climb

there is no one, so it's better not to postpone the matter indefinitely. I am accompanied by the head of the paramilitary guard of the bridge, a young but overweight guy. He flaunts his bearing, constantly adjusts the holster of his revolver and generally wants to show that they are not born with a bast here. I'm looking at farms. The turn comes to deep mine pipes. The head of security remains on the bridge, and I lower the electric torch down the chimney. I peer. And I freeze in place. In the pipe lies a charge of dynamite, covered with thick oily

on the fly...

— We'll have to close the traffic on the bridge! I say to the head of security. He turns white. His thick lower lip droops helplessly. But I'm not up to the head of security. I hurry to the members of the commission to report on the terrible find. Gelatinous dynamite, covered with an oily coating, is extremely dangerous. It is extremely sensitive to mechanical influences. It only takes a small impact, even friction, to make the dynamite explode. The instructions require that this substance be destroyed, avoiding carrying ... The commission is alarmed. And while I am examining other mine tubes, reports are already flying to the headquarters of the district and to the People's Commissariat of Railways. Traffic on the road is interrupted. How long? Obviously, for a long time: I find charges of dynamite with sweating nitroglycerin in other supports. Pure coincidence that the bridge is still intact. It is sickening to look at the limp head of security. He forgot about bearing, fussing, trying to explain to everyone that he was here recently. Seizing a minute, asks

me:

- After all, the charges are old? Really old? It's not his fault, poor thing. Charges are really old. But I answer very dryly. A person who does not know how to control himself is unpleasant. However, my tone is unimportant to the head of security. It is important for him to hear that he has nothing to do with it. And the fat face of the guy spreads into an uncertain smile. - What should be done? the chairman asks me

commissions. - Please note that it is impossible to delay the movement for a long time.

- Now, Yevsey Karpovich, movement is impossible! Please call the demolition team. Preferably the command of my regiment. Nobody argues. The challenge to the team is sent immediately. And I try to keep aloof to avoid questions: after all, I myself do not know what to do. None of the methods of clearance known to me

seems suitable. Start taking out the dynamite, who can guarantee that we will not kill the soldiers and blow up the bridge? I personally don't vouch. I was told quite a lot in the classroom that dynamite with an oily coating is especially sensitive to mechanical stress. It just needs to be blown up. But as? Along with the bridge, right? —

Think! Think, damn you! I say to myself. — Think! I do not want to eat or drink. Tired and gloomy, I come to the service car. I can't wash my dirty hands. I ask for hot water. Hot soapy water washes away greasy oil stains. And suddenly it hit me like an electric shock: here it is the way out! Found! It is necessary to pour fuel oil into the mine pipes, pour sawdust, and then wash the dynamite with warm alkaline water. I could hardly wait for the arrival of my fighters. I told them what the problem was and we got to work. What happiness! Fuel oil, dry sawdust and hot water worked flawlessly. Now I could report: - The bridge will be cleared of mines in

the near future! I spent all day on the bridge. I caught a severe cold, but I can't leave. It stayed that way until the danger was over. Yes, and there was no need to rest. While fiddling with the bridge, I launched the documentation. I had to make up for lost time... Despite the unforeseen delay, the special commission completed the work on time and earned the gratitude of the district commander. At the end of November I returned to the regiment. The trip of a special commission to survey the border was only the beginning of a huge work, which included more and more people and entire units. We were faced with the task of doing everything so that the enemy could not use our roads during the invasion. Now I had to visit Kharkov often and study various documents at the district headquarters. We were closely watched by the chief of staff of the district, P.P. Lebedev, and the commander himself, Iona Emmanuilovich Yakir. At the end of 1929, preparations for the installation of barriers on the border were completed. More than 60 special subversive teams with a total of 1,400 people were trained in the district. Dozens of warehouses with mine explosives were laid. On all significant bridges of the border strip, mine pipes, wells, niches and chambers were repaired. Stored 1640 ready-made complex charges and tens of thousands of incendiary tubes that could be put into action

literally instantly. In addition to explosive barriers, others were also created. Their entire system was linked to the system of fortified areas. Now it was possible with relatively small forces and in a relatively short time to make it impossible for the enemy to move along our roads for a long time. In those years, another important task was already set: to disable the lines of communication captured by the enemy so that when they were liberated by our troops, traffic would quickly be restored. The leadership of the engineering troops and military communications of the Red Army clearly understood that this could be achieved only by skillfully combining evacuation and destruction with the use of guided mines and delayed-action mines (MZD). The latter were to play a major role. A few words about the MZD In 1928 - 1929, the army already had a number of slow and instant anti-train mines. Some of them could blow up any specified train, even a specific carriage of this train. But there was. these mines have one very significant drawback: they worked only when installed under the sleepers or close to the rails. Left much to be desired and tightness. However, mine blasting has steadily progressed. Improved, in particular, and methods of arrangement of charges, increased the reliability of their simultaneous explosion on large objects and in any weather. We hoped that in the near future we would get a sufficient number of mines of various designs, excellent in quality, including anti-train mines, which could be installed out of touch with rails and sleepers. Alas! We never received them! During the years of Stalin's arbitrariness, the mines necessary for the army not only did not get into mass production, but even their drawings perished along with the designers. Nobody, of course, expected this. In the autumn of 1929, while preparing for maneuvers, we were full of confidence in a better future...

## Chapter 5

Night. Wind. On one of the sections of the road to the west of Korosten, there is an unusual revival. I. E. Yakir came to check the readiness of the barriers. Together with the commander - the head of military communications, representatives of the Office of the South-Western Railway, commanders of railway units. Yakir and his companions confidently walked in the darkness along the railway track. We, the demolition commanders, nervously walked behind. The command was given:

- Start mining! Now it will be seen whether we worked well or badly. Time passes unbearably slowly. The head of military communications of the district, F.K. Dmitriev, now and then illuminates the chronometer dial with a flashlight. But there are no and no reports of readiness for an explosion ... I peer intently into the darkness and, it seems, I see how clumsily people are moving on objects, how slowly electric detonators are inserted into the charges. Oh, if you could throw yourself into the darkness and help the fighters! But we must stand and wait. Stand and wait. Yakir doesn't say a word. He is also waiting. Finally comes the message: — Everyone is ready! A minute later, sharp flashes of training explosives tore out of the darkness the spans of the bridge, arrows, sections

of the canvas. The echo picked up the hum. The path is "destroyed"! Yet the results of the teaching did not satisfy us. During the last training sessions, the demolition men acted much faster. Dejected, we climbed into the wagon of the district commander for a debriefing. Yakir was in no hurry to

conclusions.

- First of all, eat and warm up! he ordered. Sat down at the table. We took glasses of hot tea. We had no time for tea drinking ... And suddenly we heard the cheerful voice of the commander:

- Do not lose heart miners. I understand what the trouble is, and I make allowances for the presence of high authorities ... Previously, they acted faster?

"Hurry,

Iona Emmanuilovich," someone called back.

- I can console you, - Yakir laughed, - during the war, the big bosses will not stand above the soul. It suits you? There were smiles on our faces. "Well, that's great," the

commander approved. Now let's analyze the exercises and find out what is the reason for the insufficient clarity of your actions. Attention please! Iona Emmanuilovich was a wonderful orator. He spoke clearly and figuratively. He was able to expose the noticed errors and advise how to get rid of them. And no spread! Just making sure things go smoothly. Yakir was not considered a good-natured man. He knew the price of exactingness. But when they demanded, everyone felt that he was dealing not just with a "big boss", that he was facing an older, wiser comrade ... About a year later, a commission sent from the center again checked the readiness for the installation of barriers and destruction in the border areas. This time the results were different... The soldiers guarding the bridges (they are also demolition workers) acted in a coordinated and confident manner. The sixty-meter bridge across the Ubort River near Olevsk, for example, was completely prepared for destruction with a duplicated blasting system in two and a half minutes. I do not know exactly how this was done, but I know that advance preparations for the installation of barriers (destruction) on railways in the border strip were also carried out in other border military districts. For this purpose, a special Instruction ("Red Book") and Regulations ("Green Book") were issued. For the first time, the Manual described in detail how to damage the railway track, bridges and other objects on the railways. It played a big role in the improvement of mine blasting. The "Green Book" - Regulations - clearly defined the options for the destruction and damage of railway facilities, depending on how long it is desirable to put them out of action. All calculations of forces and means were made for complete and partial destruction. The necessary stocks of mine explosives were created for the complete destruction of roads in the strip up to 60-100 kilometers from the border, and they were located near protected objects. In the classes with the command staff of subversive teams, it was especially emphasized that when deciding on the nature and extent of barriers (destruction), it is necessary to carefully



weigh the consequences to which they will lead. We must strive to exclude any possibility of using the destroyed object by the enemy and at the same time not create insurmountable difficulties for restoring movement when our troops return. Father's death A letter was waiting for me at the apartment. I recognized my sister's hand at the address. Recklessly opened the envelope and petrified. My sister wrote that my father had died. He was already buried, not waiting to wait for his sons to disperse around the country ... We are in

... eternal debt to those who gave us life and helped us get on our feet. Why do we sharply recall this only after their death? I didn't light a fire for a long

... time... Eleven years ago, when I was in Tver, I was informed about the death of my mother. She died quite young. Back-breaking work on the railroad and at home, caring for six children and her husband, eternal chores, systematic lack of sleep aged her and brought her to the grave before her time. Circumstances were such that I could not go to the funeral. And now my father is dead. And I wasn't there again...

## Chapter 6. 1930 Guerrilla school

In January 1930, I was summoned to Kharkov, to the headquarters of the Ukrainian military district. A frosty haze hung over the city. Frost covered the bare branches of lindens. But, despite the cold, long queues lined up at food stores with fake windows. At the headquarters I was received by the head of one of the departments, August Ivanovich Baar. He was a tall, angular man. They usually talk about such people: wide bone. I knew that Baar was a Latvian, but he looked like a lumberjack from the dense taiga, who had lived for many years among silent ravines and cedar forests. On the red buttonholes of Baar, two rhombuses flaunted. The hand extended to me was also the hand of a lumberjack - large, hard, as if roughened from a solid ax handle. Baar spoke in a thick voice, obviously restraining his bass, and his phrases came out jerky, ragged. I decided that in front of me was a gloomy and reserved person. Alert. He answered questions in the same monosyllables as they were asked. Our conversation obviously did not stick. But Baar got down to business. said that I was to train partisans.

- This is more difficult and more difficult than teaching young Red Army soldiers. Comrade Yakir will tell you more clearly about everything. Let's go to him. The commander sorted out the papers. He raised his face and smiled.

Baar introduced me. "It's easier to talk to old acquaintances," said Yakir. He enthusiastically spoke about the goals of training partisans and the methods of their training. Yakir also said that explosive barriers could not disable roads for a long time. The enemy, having good technique, is able to restore them quickly. Therefore, we will train partisans to mine the roads and other communications being restored by the enemy. Our task is to train saboteurs who are invisible to the enemy and who are deeply conspiratorial. When the enemy is on our territory, the partisans must turn the restored areas into traps. - Clear?

"All is clear, Comrade Commander.

- Very good. Only here there is one "but" ... Comrade Baar, apparently, warned you that you have to train experienced and distinguished people. Very experienced! Therefore, it is necessary to teach in such a way that they are not disappointed. They do not need to repeat the basics. Let's get some new stuff. As much as possible new! And keep in mind - in the tactics of the guerrilla struggle itself, they are still better versed than you. So do not hurt the pride of people and learn from them

everything that may be needed.

Clear? "Understood, Comrade Commander. "You are entrusted with an important Party task, Comrade Starinov," Yakir warned without a smile. "You have to deal with him. For a moment he stared at me intently, as if seeing me for the first time or re-evaluating me, and suddenly,

without any transition, he asked sternly: - By the way, how are you? Do not suffer from the consequences of rheumatism? I was somewhat at a loss: I did not expect such a question and could not figure out how Yakir knew about my ailment. In the deep autumn of 1926, while working together with soldiers in icy water, I really fell ill with rheumatism, and this caused a complication in my heart. But it seems that no one complained about h

"Now I feel pretty good," I hastened to assure the commander. - Well, I am very

glad! .. So, the nature of the future work is clear to you. You will receive assignments from comrade Baar or his deputy ... I know you as a bomber. As a demoman, we take you to Comrade Baar's department. There, I hope, they will make you another scout and partisan. Turning his head towards Baar, he waited for an answer. Baar boomed in a deep voice:

"We'll try, Iona Emmanuilovich. Comrade Zakharov can educate yourself assistants ... Yakir rose springily from the table:

- I wish you success! In the pedagogical field, the New business fascinated and captured me. At first, I trained future partisans only in mine-blasting, but I myself learned a lot and a lot. He delved into the history of guerrilla wars, into the tactics of guerrilla warfare against the enemy, into the subtleties and wisdom of intelligence. Involuntarily I had to think about the creation of such engineering mines,

which can be used precisely behind enemy lines. In one of the conversations with future partisans, Iona Emmanuilovich Yakir quoted Lenin's words that the Bolsheviks could and should take advantage of improvements in technology, should teach the masses how to prepare bombs, help combat squads stock up on explosives, fuses, and automatic rifles. "These words of the

leader of the proletarian revolution," emphasized Yakir, "have not lost their significance even in our time. They are directly related to those who will organize and lead the battle with the enemy in his rear, that is, to the partisans. Partisan actions are not revenge, but military operations! On the personal instructions of I. E. Yakir, I organized a workshop-laboratory, where I developed models of mines with my comrades, the most convenient for use in guerrilla warfare. In this laboratory, the so-called "coal" mines were born, which were successfully used during the Great Patriotic War by our wonderful partisans Konstantin Zaslonov, Anatoly Andreev and many other heroes of the struggle against the Nazis. It was here that the idea of creating some now widely known automatic mines was born and found flesh. We designed the so-called "wheel locker", later dubbed in Spain as the "rapida" (fast) mine. They came up with and worked out ways to undermine cars and trains with mines controlled by wires and with the help of twine. Future partisans not only got acquainted with the device of these mines. If necessary, they could now make each of them. Much attention was also paid to the independent manufacture of fuses and grenades, the ability to calculate and lay explosive charges. Various specialists were recruited into the partisan detachments at the direction of I.E. Yakir. In addition to improving in the main specialty, they also deeply studied related military professions. Each miner was also a master of disguise. Comrade Yakir took care of putting together a strong, combat-ready backbone of future partisan detachments and brigades. He demanded that these formations be formed in such a way that they included both experienced partisans, accustomed to campaigns behind enemy lines, and young regular commanders. The commander set the task for us to improve the already known methods of guerrilla warfare, to look for new opportunities, to achieve

high maneuverability of partisan groups and be able to provide them financially. In youth, you often form an opinion about people on the go, based on first impressions, and it is not surprising that you are often mistaken. Sometimes you experience bitterness, sometimes shame. I conducted classes with the partisans on the study of the Lewis machine gun. I must note that our command paid the most serious attention to the study of weapons of foreign models: after all, future partisans would definitely have to use captured weapons. So, we conjured over the Lewis machine gun. I already had some practice, and I was not very embarrassed, although G. I. Baar was in the class. Having told about the tactical and technical data of the machine gun, I rather quickly dismantled it. But any little-studied weapon has a very unpleasant property: it is easy to disassemble it, but difficult to assemble. At that time, I had to be convinced of the correctness of this sad truth. The damned "Lewis" did not want to take on its original form. I turned one detail in my hands for a long time, not knowing where to put it. The students patiently waited for the end of the teacher's efforts. Out of delicacy, they did not betray their attitude to what was happening, And then Baar's thick bass was heard:

— Allow me, comrade Starinov? My hands are itching...

— Please... Gustav Ivanovich leisurely picked up a machine gun, cast a stern look in the direction of his comrade, who was laughing, and, frowning his brows, however deftly and very quickly assembled the "Lewis". "This is how we once assembled captured machine guns," Baar said, stroking the blued barrel with his big hand. - Train more, then you will quickly collect. This work, comrades, must be done mechanically. And if you have to - and to the touch ... He hesitated for a moment, then apologized to me for interfering, and again handed me the machine gun. How grateful I was for the profit! Baar saved me from disgrace in time, and even turned things around as if all my fault was only in slowness! Overcoming embarrassment, I brought the lesson to the end. And as soon as the students left, Baar, interrupting my excuses, good-naturedly advised: - Do not spare the time to

get acquainted with such "machines." Useful in life, believe the word! We really need to know foreign samples. A guerrilla should be able to immediately use captured weapons! It was nice to feel

shoulder the heaviness of the Baar hand. And I had to be convinced of the correctness of his words both in Spain and during the partisan struggle in the rear of the Nazis. And how can you be sure! From the day of the embarrassment with the "Lewis", I no longer considered Baar to be either withdrawn or gloomy: I realized how much warmth lurks behind the outward rudeness and seeming unsociableness of this person ... 1931. Difficulty in teaching It was 1931. G. I. Baar and M. E. Yakir often visited us at practical classes. I remember their arrival at the classes devoted to the actions of the partisan ambush on the highway. On a dark night, Yakir walked around a column of brand new trucks of domestic production.

What kind of technology do we have today? the commander rejoiced. - This is not the time of the civil war! Not by the day, but by the hour we are gaining strength! I also remember how Yakir, together with Baar, stood on the airfield of the airfield near Kharkov, watching the landing of partisan paratroopers. Yakir admired the new planes and rejoiced at the successful landing. I remember the speech of Iona Emmanuilovich at the graduation of a group of commanders, commissars, chiefs of staff and specialists who were planned to be the organizers of future partisan formations. In total, forty people gathered, of which more than half were participants in the guerrilla war against the interventionists in the south. Yakir spoke brightly and convincingly. "The Soviet Union is a peace-loving country," he

said, "and does not threaten anyone. Our peacefulness, real, genuine, is known to all honest people of the world. But if the imperialists attack us, we will give them a crushing rebuff, using all our might, including guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines. For this you, dear comrades, prepare yourself. Further in his speech, the commander explained that waging a guerrilla war is our legitimate right increase. And then he said that the Communist Party and its Central Committee pay great attention to advance preparation for guerrilla warfare in the event of an enemy attack. At the direction of the Central Committee, all the necessary material resources are allocated for this purpose and

verified footage. We left the premises of the school, located on the outskirts of Kyiv, after midnight. Rare lights flickered. The transport was no

longer working. - Well, now let's stomp on our own two! someone said in annoyance. - In no case! Yakir turned quickly to the voice. "They will take everyone home in my car. By the way, I have other things to do here... Night parachute jump Deafening roar of transport plane engines. The fuselage trembles and vibrates. The car is climbing. Somewhere below, under the thin bottom of the airship, is the distant Leningrad land, immersed in the darkness of the night. As always before the jump, I begin to feel the heart. It expands and strives to escape from the chest. Doctors categorically forbade me from skydiving. However, I do not pay attention to this prohibition: I, the head of the team, cannot help jumping. How am I going to teach technique to my partisans if I can't see the students in action? And I'm jumping. But today the jump is unusual - at night. Maybe that's why the heart behaves especially badly? Stealthily, a sober, reasonable thought creeps into my soul: it's better to take care of my illness ... There is nothing more dangerous than such sober thoughts. But I had already trained myself not to succumb to weakness. And when the pilot raises his hand and turns around, giving a sign that it's time to eject, I stand up, as if this was all I was waiting for. The hatch is open. The fighters certainly do not take their eyes off my figure, frozen over a black bottomless abyss ... Forward! Cold, darkness, rapid fall. I pull the ring. It seems that the parachute will never open... But this is a delusion of the senses: when thrown out, fractions of seconds turn into seconds, and seconds turn into minutes. It shakes me. Finally! Now everything is all right. My heart is already beating calmly, and, as usual, I want to sing for some reason. The earth, however, is not visible. But if you think sensibly, except on the ground, I have nowhere to go down. Unless I fall into the river or plan for the forest? I'm trying to guess the distance to the ground. I stretch my legs. I'm getting ready to extinguish my parachute in time. And yet it is not possible to accurately calculate the landing. I go down hard. It's good that there is a meadow under your feet. I get up, involuntarily dust myself off, look around. The nearby forest dims dimly. On the left it smells damp. There must be a reservoir there. And above, wandering among the stars, our plane roars. There, my students are waiting for a signal from the ground, my signal that everything is fine

I make a fire. The roar of the plane, which had gone to the side, is becoming more and more audible. And here is the car above my head. So the comrades have already jumped. I look forward to them, rejoicing at a good start. The last few days have been stressful. After all, after all, we came to the Leningrad Military District not for a visit, but for maneuvers. They came to demonstrate experience in destroying the rear of the "enemy". We cannot lose face. No, although this is our first night jump! Nobody cares about the number of jumps. Successful cases are expected of us, not references to unusual conditions. However, it seems that you do not have to refer to the conditions. Everything is going as it should ... Some of the fighters were unlucky: landing, they failed to extinguish the parachute, they got sprains, dislocations, bruises, but no one left the game. The victims were bandaged, and they continued to operate.

1932 Maneuvers in the Leningrad District

The year 1932 is remembered by me for many successes. At maneuvers in the LVO in the autumn of 1932, we partisans were given as the main task the capture of headquarters and the destruction of vehicles of the "enemy". Of course, I did not miss the opportunity and obtained permission to arrange "wrecks" of trains using contactors and fuses. The area reserved for our operations was carefully guarded. The protection of the "enemy" successfully thwarted attacks on railway stations and large bridges, but they still could not ensure the safety of train traffic. On a ten-kilometer section of the railway track, partisan miners set ten mines. Nine of them worked very effectively under the training teams. But the tenth turned out to be embarrassing. We did not have time to remove it before the start of normal passenger traffic, and it crashed under a suburban train. Hearing an explosion and noticing a flash under the wheels, the driver decided that it was a firecracker warning of a track malfunction. He braked sharply. Passengers poured onto the canvas. Nobody could understand anything. Sinful. I didn't report this incident.



## Chapter 7

I joined the training of partisan personnel in 1929, but in 1932 I only realized that preparations for partisan warfare did not begin in 1929. In fact, it did not stop with the civil war. At the same time, training was carried out both through the OGPU and through the GRU. The OGPU prepared mainly underground saboteurs, heavily conspiratorial. Through the line of the People's Commissariat of Defense, commanders were trained, who, having got into the rear of the enemy with a unit, could go over to the resistance. For this purpose, hidden partisan bases were created in Western Ukraine and Moldova with large stocks of mine-disruptive weapons. Warehouses on the coast of the Danube were created even in underwater tanks in non-perishable packaging. In 1932, our defense on the Western borders was based on the use of partisan formations. The enemy troops, having crossed the state border and deepened into our territory for a hundred kilometers, had to run into fortified areas and get bogged down in a positional war. At this time, in the occupied territory, the partisans begin organized resistance and cut off communications to the enemy. After some time, having lost fresh reinforcements, the supply of ammunition and food, the enemy troops will be forced to retreat. The guerrillas begin to retreat along with the enemy, all the time remaining in his rear and continuing to sabotage. They can even cross the state border. It was a very well thought out system, not only in case of occupation of part of our territory. Bases were also laid outside the USSR. It was very important that maneuverable partisan formations were being prepared, capable of operating both on their own and on foreign territory. The scope of the preparations for these preparations can be judged by the following fact - three partisan schools were working. Two - in the GRU and one in the OGPU. The large school on Kholodnaya Gora in Kharkov was under the jurisdiction of the OGPU. The school in Kupersk trained people who came to our side from the regions of Western Ukraine and Belarus. At every school at the same time

10-12 people were trained, well-hidden. They have been preparing for about 6 months. The big school was in Kyiv. She trained officers who already had experience in guerrilla warfare. The school reported directly to the commander of the Kyiv military district and was located in the town of Grushki. Cadets were even taught to fly airplanes there! Due to the fact that the Armed Forces were well prepared since the time of the civil war, we could have a relatively small army - 600,000 people for the entire Soviet Union, surrounded by enemies. (Today it is about 1,500,000 per Russia, surrounded by seemingly friends). Hunger Stanislaw Vikentievich Kosior held a meeting, which I happened to attend. In Ukraine, as a result of forced collectivization, famine broke out. Our partisans had to be saved from starvation. Lists have been created. This interfered with the conspiracy, but they had to be arranged to work in such places as sugar factories, mills, where they would not disappear. This is what I had to do as well. We managed to save the main frames. Girls Three methods of night landing were well worked out: dropping to a point marked on the map, dropping onto a beacon descended from an aircraft; and ejection to a landmark visible at night. This fully ensured the accuracy of the landing and the speed of collecting paratroopers. Life has taught us to preliminarily study the proposed area of the release on the map. We got acquainted not only with the area closest to the landing point, but also with the area very far from it. Two points of collection were appointed: the main and the spare. It was all science. At the same time, it was possible to develop a reliable method for dropping the property of partisans without parachutes in a special, rather simple package. A new means for crashing trains on bridges was also tried. We designed a mine that was picked up from the railroad tracks by a passing train. It exploded at exactly the right time on the bridge. Then I successfully tested this mine in combat practice in Spain. The combat training of the partisans was in full swing, their art was being improved. And they do not take courage and endurance. One summer, one of the girls, while skydiving, injured her legs so badly that she could not stand up. And yet crawled to the collection point on time.

- Yulia! - alarmed her friends - What's wrong with you? And the little snub-nosed Yulia, with blue eyes full of tears, tried to smile: - Nonsense ... It will cost ...

She was eighteen years old, this thin, graceful Yulia, who was preparing to become a partisan radio operator. But a brave heart beat in a fragile girlish body. After the tragic death of one of the paratroopers, when others became discouraged, Yulia was the first to volunteer to jump from the next plane.

"Oh, girls and boys! she exclaimed with perfectly acted nonchalance. - I'm light! Throw me for a test, I won't break it! .. In all the classes next to me in those days was the partisan Rita. Persistent, self-confident, striving to do everything as best as possible, she seemed not to know fatigue. Returning from the assignment, she started games, started a song. We loved listening to her. And suddenly one day near Kupyansk, during the installation of mines on a heavily guarded section of the railway, a primer in a mock-up exploded in Rita's hands. The explosion blinded her. The smallest fragments hurt the face and eyes. Bloody, she remained silent. She walked with me to school without a single groan. There she was bandaged, and I took the girl to Kharkov with the first train. On the operating table, Rita didn't utter a sound either.

"Character..." the ophthalmologist who operated on Rita respectfully said. - How old is she? "Nineteen,

Professor," I answered curtly, keeping my eyes on the haggard girl's face. All the days before my recovery, I visited Rita, looked after her, and finally told her what I had not said to any girl until then. Rita's vision has completely recovered. We were happy. It seemed to us that nothing would ever separate us. Nothing and never... 1933. In the department of Mirra Sakhnovskaya During this period I worked in Moscow in the department of Mirra Sakhnovskaya. She was an experienced, energetic, courageous woman, who was among the first to be awarded the Order of the Red Banner. During that relatively short period of time, I managed to train two groups of Chinese and familiarize the party leadership of some foreign countries - Palmiro Togliatti, Wilhelm Pieck, Alexander Zavadsky and others with the use of mine technology. It was in the capital that I suddenly discovered that preparations for the future partisan struggle were not expanding, but were gradually

canned. Attempts to talk on this topic with Sakhnovskaya did not lead to anything. She rebuked me, declaring that the essence of the matter now was not in the training of partisan personnel, that there were already enough of them, but in the organizational consolidation of the work done (later I learned that she experienced the shortcomings in our work more sharply top). Unresolved proposals somewhere than I did. All of her at the were rejected organizational issues really accumulated a lot. But they were not solved in our department. The future legendary hero of Republican Spain Karol Swierchewsky reassured: from above, they say, you know better. I also believed in it. But it became more and more difficult to reconcile with this belief the growing internal protest. The state was depressed. Friends who met in Moscow from the 4th Korostensky Red Banner " Regiment warmly advised me to enter the academy. I heeded their arguments. I myself began to feel that I lacked a lot of knowledge. True, I myself have twice already made attempts to enter the Military Transport Academy. And I was fired twice because of heart disease. But now it began to seem to me that then I simply did not show the proper perseverance, assertiveness. Having familiarized myself with the program of the department of engineers of a narrow specialty, where the old comrades studied, I was convinced that I could, perhaps, immediately enter the second year. And I dared ... I reported to Mirra Sakhnovskaya about my intention. She approved, wrote a certification and blessed to study. The rest depended on the head of our department, Ya. K. Berzin. Jan Karlovich supported me. The recommendations received from him overpowered the conclusion of the medical commission. The resolution on enrolling me in the Military Transport Academy was imposed by its then head S. A. Pugachev. The seeds of Andreevich Pugachev were also infinitely respected in the army. On his chest were the Order of the Red Banner, the Orders of the Bukhara and Khorezm Republics. Even during the civil war, I heard more than once about S. A. Pugachev. A highly educated officer of the general staff of the tsarist army, he actively participated in the armed defense of the October conquests. In 1934, on the recommendation of G. K. Ordzhonikidze and S. M. Kirov, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks accepted him into the party ... So, Pugachev himself imposed a resolution on my application. But... the senior clerk refused to put my name on the list: the limit had not been lowered.

Arguing with a clerk if there is a formidable limit behind him is useless! I had to spend about two weeks to get an appointment with the head of military communications of the Red Army, Comrade E. F. Appoga.

“You see how simple

everything is,” the senior clerk of the military unit of the Military Transport Academy flourished, having received a piece of paper drawn up in accordance with all the rules. I preferred to keep silent... I had to take the last frontier: to enter directly into the second year. Pugachev tried to dissuade me from this

undertaking. “It will be too difficult for you. The head of the railway department, Dmitriev, “Kuzmich,” as the audience affectionately called him behind his back, came to the rescue.

“But Starinov has missed so many years already. And the time is such that it’s a shame to hesitate ... Let him try! he delicately objected to the head of the academy, stroking his lush mustache. And Pugachev agreed.

## Chapter 8. 1934 Studying at the Academy

Life gradually came into a rut. I decided that it was already possible to call Rita. Wrote to Kyiv. All deadlines have expired, but there is no answer and no. He sent a telegram, another ... Finally received a postcard. Rita's handwriting, but the content is unclear: as if the postcard was not intended for me, and the signature seemed unusual. I couldn't remain ignorant. Submitted a report and received permission to leave. On the way I bought newspapers and, in order to escape from unhappy thoughts, I tried to read. But the newspapers of that time were not suitable for calming the nerves. Disturbing news came from Germany. Democracy and culture were buried there... Reprisals against famous writers and scientists. Persecution of Jews. Torture in the Gestapo dungeons. Nightmare of the concentration camps. Bonfires from books on the streets of Leipzig. The growth of the Wehrmacht. Hitler's delusional cries about the need to end communism ... Yes, the newspapers made me worry even more. But all the more, in spite of everything, I wanted simple human happiness, the closeness of a loved one. I went straight from the train to the address on the postcard. An unremarkable house on a quiet street. Dirty staircase with chipped steps. Door covered with dark oilcloth. An unfamiliar woman answered the knock. I named myself. The woman hesitated, running a hand through her hair. I heard not words, but rather a sigh: "She is no longer here. - How not? Where is she? The woman raised her face. It was

sympathetic and bewildered:

- I don't know ... Believe me ... She just left ... I said goodbye and left. The door with dark oilcloth slammed shut. We left behind a staircase with chipped steps, an inconspicuous house, an inconspicuous street ... until the spring of 1943 (everyone who worked with the manuscript of Ilya Grigorievich was interested in the fate of Rita. However, our attempts to find out what happened to her were unsuccessful. Ilya Grigorievich avoided answering. Note ed. E. A.) 1935. End of the academy. It's been two years of intense study. May 1935 was on the threshold. Spring was early, friendly. The snow melted back in early April,

and the trees are already covered with young foliage. At the intersections, like mushrooms after the rain, soda saleswomen poured out. Ice-cream makers, which had disappeared somewhere for the winter, reappeared in the motley stalls. Couples in love loomed at the gates of the entrances almost until dawn. On the eve of the May celebrations, the capital became prettier: banners were thrown across the streets, flags were thrown out of the houses. The country summed up the pre-May competition. Newspapers and radio reported on the labor victories of the builders of Magnitogorsk and Kuzbass, on excess tons of coal, ore, steel, oil, and on the successes of collective farm construction. Moscow rejoiced. We, graduates of military academies, rejoiced too. They rejoiced, maybe more than others. After all, we received a higher military education! In the early morning of May 1, we froze in clear ranks on Red Square, impatiently listening to the melodic chime of the chimes. The leaders of the party and government came to the podium of the Mausoleum. The commander of the parade, A. I. Kork, met the People's Commissar of Defense K. E. Voroshilov on a bay horse. There was a loud repeated "Hurrah!"... Typing a step, we walked in front of the Mausoleum... And on May 4, 1935, we were invited to the Kremlin... After the parade of graduates of the academies, we listened with bated breath to Stalin's speech. It was the first time I saw him so close. The more I looked, the less this short man with a fluffy mustache and low forehead looked like the Stalin we usually saw in photographs and posters. Stalin talked about what worried everyone: about people, about cadres. And how convincingly he spoke! Here I first heard: "Cadres decide everything." The words about how important it is to take care of people, to protect them have stuck in my memory for the rest of my life... As now, I see the excited, happy faces of the head of our academy, Pugachev, and my neighbor, a former machinist, a graduate of the academy, Vanya Kiryanov... In less than three years, they, and not only them, but perhaps the majority of those who were present at the reception and enthusiastically listened to Stalin, were arrested and died as a result of repression. I graduated from the academy with honors and was awarded a nominal watch. Together with other excellent students, I was recommended to work in the apparatus of the People's Commissariat of Railways. Graduates of our academy went to the NKPS with great pleasure: they were offered high posts there. But I refused. After serving for about 16





## Chapter 9

Soon I was summoned to the department of military communications of the Red Army and announced my appointment to the post of deputy military commandant of the railway section (ZKU), whose office was located in the station building of the Leningrad-Moskovsky station. The expression on my face apparently spoke brighter than words, how I took this news. The comrade who announced my appointment frowned and considered it necessary to read the

notation: "You are given a great honor ... not to mention the fact that you will have to ensure the work of your direction from a military point of view ..." Solemn notes suddenly sounded in his voice, genuine pathos was heard : — You have the

honor to meet and accompany the highest military leaders! He even puffed out his chest and now measured me with a victorious look. I realized that I couldn't get a better appointment here, and I reconciled myself. The only consolation was that there was a whole month of vacation ahead. But in Berdyansk, where they gave me a vacation ticket, a telegram was waiting for me about the death of the closest of the brothers, thirty-year-old Alyosha. Alyosha was distinguished by amazing abilities. After graduating from only a four-year elementary school, he already in his youth made the most complicated lames. new receivers, was fond of automation, electronics. Experienced engineers predicted a bright future for him.,: And then Alyosha was gone. He had weak lungs, and a severe cold cut short the life of a cheerful inquisitive person ... The southern sun faded for me. Unsettled, I soon left Berdyansk .... That summer they lived there too cheerfully... In a crowded place My new boss, Boris Ivanovich Filippov, knew the business and loved it. He did not have a higher education, but he had a lot of experience and was respected. However, the practical advice of Boris Ivanovich was sometimes embarrassing. Once, almost simultaneously, the brigade commander and the captain - adjutant commander of the troops

districts. Without thinking twice, I gave the brigade commander a place in a soft car, and offered the captain a hard one. Boris Ivanovich was horrified.

"What have you done, my dear? he exclaimed in despair, ruffling his hair. What did they teach you at the academy? Is it possible to compare a brigade commander with an adjutant commander?! He is a brigade commander, and an adjutant ... After all, he, damned, sees the commander every day and hour! .. He can sing about us like that! .. The commandant stopped running around the office, stopped, took a breath and flopped into an armchair. - Here's what, my dear ... Drop the lyrics. I say seriously: do not

offend the adjutants in the future ... Suddenly he got excited again: - Yes, adjutants! conductor! - and some brigade commander from the line troops - do you hear? brigade commander! - then you, my dear, drop everything - and blood from your nose - but so that the conductor has a ticket! Here! And let Chernyugov take care of the brigade commander, clerk! - Boris Ivanovich ... - I am Boris Ivanovich only because I sacredly observe this rule! You are still naive, that's what! Well, what can brigade commander? Write a complaint? Let him write! And the conductor, you understand, will hold a grudge and, if necessary,

to the commander or

marshal, serving tea, he will take and let the hairpin, you son of a bitch! Here, Comrade Marshal will say, it's bad with water now, and it's cool, and there's not enough coal ... And all the Leningrad commandant is Filippov. I already addressed him, but he paid no attention. Only promises... Boris Ivanovich even blushed during this monologue, imagining obviously how the "son of a bitch" conductor "allows" such a hairpin and what kind of

consequences.

- If you think that the conductors of the cars of high officials, and even more so their adjutants, are ordinary people, then you are mistaken. Much is trusted to them, much is asked of them. Therefore, we must, to the best of our ability, facilitate their difficult work! We must maintain the authority of our commandant's office! And you, with your academic approach, cut me without a knife ... Boris Ivanovich's excitement was aggravated by the fact that in the autumn of 1935 the assignment of new military ranks began. There were lieutenants, captains,

majors, colonels, brigade commanders, commanders, commanders, army commanders and marshals. Everyone was worried, not knowing what title they would receive during recertification. Still would! Some had to remove rhombuses from their buttonholes and put on three, or even two sleepers, that is, speaking in the present, lose their general ranks and return to colonels or majors. Boris Ivanovich was lucky - he remained with his two sleepers and rejoiced. The commandant's office was in a busy place. Party and government leaders, leading employees of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the General Staff, and district commanders often arrived in Leningrad. Our duties included meeting and accompanying them from Leningrad to Moscow, ensuring the technical safety of travel. This flattered Boris Ivanovich's pride. "He shone during the ceremonies like a big child. It was impossible to be angry with him or to be ironic: his sincerity simply disarmed. I had to repeatedly accompany Blucher, Tukhachevsky, Voroshilov, Shaposhnikov, then commander of the Leningrad Military District, to Moscow. We were often invited to tea or dinner at Shaposhnikov, Tukhachevsky ...

## Chapter 10

Friends in Trouble Are Known In the autumn of 1935, trouble suddenly fell on my head. Party documents were checked. I was summoned to the political department of the special forces of the Leningrad garrison. The head of the political department, offering to sit down, studied my party card for a long time. I knew the head of the political department for more than one day. But then it was as if he had been replaced.

"So you are Starinov?" He finally broke the silence. Yes, Starinov. I hope my party card is in order? - And you wait to ask questions ...

Better answer: did not vote for the opposition's resolution? - No! He thought for a moment and asked: "Were you captured by the Whites?" — Yes, it was. This is written in all my profiles, in my autobiography.

On the very first night I escaped from captivity and returned to my twentieth rifle regiment! - So you yourself speak and write! And who knows how you were captured and how you got out of

there? Where is the evidence that you fled? - There are documents in the archives ... There are living brother-soldiers! - Documents, brother-soldiers ... The head of

the political department again thought and for a short time seemed as attentive, sincere as I knew him. Then he again looked at my party card, which he did not let go of, and suddenly asked: "Maybe you are not Starinov, but Starikov?" "We have a quarter of the yards in the village - the Starinovs and not a single Starikov," I answered with difficulty restraining myself. My interlocutor was the first to avert his eyes. Pursing his lips, he paused, apparently making some decision, and finally declared:

- All your words must be checked and proved. Collect references. And the membership card will remain with us. I probably looked completely bewildered, because the head of the political department advised:

- Don't lose your head. Collect the necessary documents. We'll ask for the archives... There was no hostility in his gaze. It even seemed to me that he himself was embarrassed by something. I don't remember how I got to the commandant's office. The kindest Boris Ivanovich Filippov, who learned about what had happened, drew a long face.

- How is it, my dear? .. I could not tell the details. It occurred to me with anguish that Boris Ivanovich, with all his kindness, would not be of any help. Don't I know how careful he is? And here - the political department ... I am suspected of deliberately changing my surname, of deceiving the party, almost of treason ... - That's it, my dear ...

Let's go to my house. Yes. For fish. I brought it back from fishing yesterday," I heard the excited voice of Boris Ivanovich. - We'll get you a vacation, go where you need to and bring the necessary papers ... Don't be upset. Let's go fish! Comradely sympathy was dear, but I refused the invitation. Went home, jumped on the bed. What will happen? How to live if you are suspected of such crimes? The phone rang. Boris Ivanovich, it turns out, has already managed to visit both the Road Administration and the headquarters of the military district. "It's all right, my dear!" You have been allowed leave. Go for

documents. And don't worry! Everything is formed! I felt ashamed. How could I doubt Boris Ivanovich? It was he, not me, who turned out to be a real person in a difficult moment ...

"Well, well, my dear..." Filippov interrupted me in the commandant's office, when I began to confusingly talk about how I was ashamed of myself. - Found what ... Get a ticket and with God. Good luck! That same evening I went to collect certificates stating that I was Starinov, not Starikov, and that I really escaped from captivity and honestly fought for Soviet power. Anxiety and pain did not go away, but it became easier at the thought that Boris Ivanovich Filippov was not the only good person in the world, that thousands of wonderful people live on earth and that my comrades would not leave me ... First of all, I went to my academy. "God knows what! - exclaimed, after

listening to my story, the head of the faculty Dmitriev. - Well, wait a minute ... He took out a paper and immediately wrote the necessary one by hand: a certificate.

"Everything will be settled, Ilya Grigoryevich!" Dmitriev said confidently.  
- You yourself heard Comrade Stalin, remember how he called for protecting and appreciating personnel ... Just some kind of misunderstanding, and maybe slander. Now I had to go to my native village. I got off at Orel with a large backpack: knowing that you couldn't buy much in the selmags, I stocked up on sugar, herring, and even white bread. In 1935, buses did not run from Orel to the villages. I had to walk along the side of the road. The Bolkhov road is long and muddy after the rains. An autumn chilly breeze is blowing. Sadly ... Here is the convoy. Will they plant or not? A man was sitting on the front wagon. There was something surprisingly familiar in the thin, unshaven face with a uniquely sly smile. If only the patched zipunishko and bast shoes were removed from the peasant and dressed in a Red Army tunic, in boots with windings ...

- Alyosha! I shouted, beside myself with joy, "Alyosha?" You?! Alyosha Bakaev, my colleague in the 20th Infantry Regiment, who had grown old and gray-haired, did not jump off, but actually rolled off the cart. We hugged tightly, broke away from each other, hugged again.

- How old is this, Grigoryevich? Alyosha muttered. - No way, ten? How are you wind to us? Other carriers ran up. Someone patted me on the shoulder. I looked around and couldn't believe my eyes. Arkhip Denisovich Tsarkov stood before me, stretching out his hardened hands. The same Arkhip Tsarkov, with whose light hand I once became a sapper! — Arkhip! - Ilyushka! "I don't

recognize  
you, Arkhip....

Yes, and you have changed.

You look in high ranks... - What ranks are there! How glad

I am, guys, relatives ... - It's not good to huddle on

the road, - one of the drivers soberly judged. -Let's go, shall we? Talk at home! The convoy moved. Sitting on a cart next to Arkhip Tsarkov and Alexei Bakaev, I told them what had brought me to the village. Fellow soldiers were surprised and saddened:

"And they don't believe you, do they?" Y-yes... You fought to the end! You, as a well-deserved fighter, were sent to a military school! What is going on? I stopped at Arkhip Tsarkov's: his family is smaller than Bakaev's,

and the hut is more spacious. We sat at the table. The hostess served potatoes in cast iron. I pulled out bread and herring.

"You brought good bread," said Arkhip, chewing on a slice. — And tomorrow we will bake real rye. With a meeting! .. On holidays, we, brother, already bake clean, without chaff ... Tell me, how is our army? Strong? — Strong, Arkhip. - Well, it's easier for me when I know

that we don't endure

in vain. They went to bed, it was barely getting dark: Arkhip had little kerosene. And the next day, Tsarkov and I went to the neighboring villages to look for brother-soldiers who remembered me well. There were many such, and I collected a whole pile of references. We went to the city of Volkhov to certify the certificates.

Everything went off without a hitch. My joy would be complete, if I did not notice the clogged huts, the fields and gardens overgrown with weeds, the dark windows, - Do you hear? They don't play accordion, and the girls don't sing," Arkhip once said. - Young people strive to go to the city, but who was sent in vain ... Eh! If collectivization were carried out, as they explained to us at political classes! And the collective farms would have looked different, and we would have kept the livestock ... I believe the most difficult is over. This year, for example, they sowed more, and the work went more cheerfully... The Party will set things right on the collective farms! Let's revive!.. \* \* \* Boris Ivanovich Filippov greeted me joyfully. He looked through the bundle of certificates he had brought and approved of the efforts expended: - The paper, it's blue, is now in force! .. I took the certificates to the political department. I

was told that everything will be checked, but for now wait. Waited a long time. I was temporarily suspended from work with secret documents, they did not send me to accompany the authorities. Boris Ivanovich experienced what was happening no less than I did, but he firmly believed in a successful outcome: - The main thing, blue, your papers are in order! And as before, he invited me to tea, then to fish. Finally, a call to the

political department of the special forces of the garrison. - Well, they checked everything, - the head of the political department met me. "No one will bother you now. I understand that

everything was not easy for you, but ... When the formalities were completed, the head of the political department handed me a new party card and, shaking my hand tightly, looked at me embarrassedly, in a friendly way. It's hard for me

came from his embarrassment. But behind me was an office, a corridor, a staircase... On the street, I touched my left breast pocket. Party ticket was with me! Rushed to the commandant's office.

- Boris Ivanovich! .. He understood everything without words. Made me sit down. He

rubbed his palms: - That's it, blue! God sees the truth! And, smiling contentedly, he

suddenly lowered his eyebrows: "Get ready, Comrade Starinov, to accompany the commander of the first rank Shaposhnikov. Today! Enjoying the effect produced, Filippov winked and laughed:

"After all, life is good, my blue! That's it!



## **PART II. WE ARE INTERNATIONALISTS**

## Chapter 1. 1936 By the call of the "Old Man".

The summer of 1936 began with hot, cloudless days, bright nights, and alarming messages from telegraph agencies: in Spain, where the Popular Front won the February elections [In 1931, the monarchy was overthrown in Spain and a republic was established. However, the reactionary forces basically retained their economic power and political influence. The Lerrus government (1933-1935) tried to destroy all democratic gains. The working people rose up to defend the republic. In 1934, an armed uprising took place in Asturias, Catalonia, Madrid and other regions. At the beginning of 1936, the anti-fascist forces, in the vanguard of which was the Communist Party, united in the People's Front. After the victory of the Popular Front in the elections to the Cortes (February 1936), a left-republican government was formed. The country embarked on the path of democratic development. (Author's note)], fascist generals openly opposed the legitimate government.

- You sons of bitches! my boss Boris Ivanovich swore curtly. - To fill their faces ... No one doubted that Franco and his minions would be "filled in the face." The rebels who deceived part of the army would never have stood against the people. But Nazi Germany and Italy came to their aid. Hitler and Mussolini sent aircraft, tanks, regular units to the rebels. Throughout our country, rallies began to seethe, there were demonstrations of solidarity with Republican Spain. The Soviet people decided to give the fighting Spanish brothers not only moral support, but also material assistance. Fundraising has begun. Labor pennies quickly folded into millions. Spain was becoming the front line of the international struggle for democracy. German and Italian anti-fascists, British and Americans, Czechs, Poles and Hungarians went to Spain to fight against the Nazis with arms in their hands. I did not find a place for myself in the calm office of the military commandant.

- Well, what are you, my dove? Boris Ivanovich was annoyed. Are you also going to Spain? So you are not small, you yourself know: if you need it, they will call. And if they don't call ... Of course, Spain could

manage without me. But I still dreamed about her. It seemed to me that the partisans. "Some kind of training and several military specialties that I possessed could be useful to the Republican army. Moreover, I knew that volunteers from our country were also coming to Spain! After much thought, I wrote a report to the People's Commissar of Defense with a request to send and outlined in detail my plans for training the Republican troops in operations behind enemy lines. The report reached the addressee quickly. They began to call me to various authorities. But it didn't go beyond inquiries about how I knew that volunteers from the USSR were going to Spain. Unexpectedly I met at the station the former head of the training department of the railway department of the Military Transport Academy of the Red Army M.V. Me at the academy." Naturally, I told him about my cherished desire to get beyond the Pyrenees, "I need to think about it," Obyden did not immediately respond. — Think? - You see ... Only this should remain between us! .. I have something to do with sending volunteers. I didn't believe my ears. I did not immediately come to my senses. — Mikhail Vasilyevich! -

Okay, I'll

try ... Ordinary left for Moscow. Three days later, our commandant's office received a telegraph message: "Immediately send Deputy ZKU Starinov to Moscow."

"Still, he got his way. And I wondered what this chance meeting would give? Boris Ivanovich threw up his hands. - Well, well done! I envy you!.. I wish you success, Ilya Grigoryevich.  
- Thank you. Do not remember dashingly.

## Chapter 2

In Moscow, I learned that I was going to Spain on a personal call from "The Old Man", my former boss Yakov Berzin. The days flew by quickly, filled to the limit with the procedures and interviews necessary in such cases, paperwork. Finally, everything is behind, and then one day:

- Meet Comrade Starinov. Your translator. Also from the volunteers, - said Gai Lazarevich Tumanyan, head of the 4th Directorate of the General Staff, solemnly. The girl shook her short, blond hair and held out her cool hand to me. "Anna Obrucheva," she said in a deep contralto voice,

emphasizing, like all northerners, the "o." I looked at Tumanyan in confusion and smiled uncertainly at Obrucheva, avoiding the gaze of her large blue eyes. In the evening of the same day, Anna Obrucheva and I stood on the platform of the Belorussky railway station near the Moscow-Stolbtsy train, ready for departure. The comrades who saw us off behaved like sensitive, caring relatives. One thing was unpleasant: we were too energetically persuaded not to worry about the remaining families, they hinted that in which case our loved ones would not be forgotten ... These assurances did not touch me at all - I was a bachelor. But Anna Obrucheva left her eight-year-old daughter in Moscow! And yet my fellow traveler did well. ... Soft sofas, mirrors, polished mahogany, door handles polished

to a sunny sheen, the soft light of a table lamp - everything in the compartment of an international carriage testified to comfort and called for peace. But I did not feel peace. Obrucheva and I were to cross Poland in a day, and this did not bode well for me. In the Polish intelligence could know about a certain Starinov, who was engaged in preparation for the conduct of partisan warfare in the border zone. Maybe the Pilsudchiks also had some photographs in the secret file? True, a small mustache somewhat changed my appearance, and I

diligently stooped, hiding a military bearing. But who knows if this disguise will help? My mood was completely spoiled when the train crossed the border and the Polish gendarmes appeared in the car, and the Polish customs officers began to carefully check the luggage. I experienced rather unpleasant moments while the gendarme examined my passport, but continued to sit with a bored look. - Ask! the gendarme

finally said, snapping his heels. Anna Obrucheva had no worries on this score: she was traveling under her real name. In Stolbtsy we made a transfer to Warsaw, from where we were supposed to go to Vienna. Flashing big headlines announced Franco's successes. Photographs depicted the quarters of Madrid occupied by the Falangists. Judging by the photographs, the Caudillo banners were already fluttering in the Spanish capital, and the population joyfully greeted the Nazi soldiers and officers. "objective" information I knew well. Corrupt scribblers didn't have to tell today in capital letters what would be refuted tomorrow by their own petite. But those tales about Spain with which they regaled me that time seemed simply unbearable. "Let's wait until Czechoslovakia, I said to my companion, "Perhaps there is something more sensible in the Prague papers... My hopes were justified to some extent. The Czechs

wrote about the Spanish events rather reservedly. Here, even seasoned journalists did not try to prejudge the fall of the republic. Moreover, I learned from the Parisian newspapers that Franco's troops had already been stopped near Madrid ... Having left Austria and passing Switzerland, we ended up in France. We looked forward to seeing Paris, where Balzac and Zola worked, where the blood of the Communards was forever soaked into the ground! Alas! I am bitterly disappointed! Before me was a bustling city, overwhelmed by the constant flashing of cars and deafening advertising, the abundance of foreigners and nuns. Snow-white bonnets and dark robes of God's brides disappeared from the Parisian streets only in the evening, giving way to prostitutes ... In Paris, I had to buy a lot of things that could be needed in the war. On trips around the city, I was usually accompanied by one of our volunteers, tanker Pavel. One day, leaving with bundles from

store, we took a taxi. Behind the wheel of the car sat a fat, slightly flabby man in a crumpled cap. I named the right street and spoke to Pavel. The driver immediately slowed down. turned around. He broke into an ingratiating smile:

- You are from Russia? Pure Russian speech and the age of the driver left no doubt: we had a white émigré in front of us. I imperceptibly pushed Pavel.

Yes, we are

Russians. "What a joy it is to meet our compatriots! Fled from the Bolsheviks? For a long time? It was not our intention to introduce ourselves to the first "Russian Parisian" we

met. - No ... We arrived recently.  
How did you survive there?

- It's a long story... And you seem to be here for a long time? Have you already settled in the capital? They even became a dashing driver. Did the taxi driver's

eyes fill with resentment? "Excuse me, but it's even bittersweet ... I am a Kursk landowner, an officer of the Markov regiment!" Yes, sir! I hope the name of the regiment tells you something? Still would! This name means a lot to me! In 1919, I fought precisely with the Markovites, was taken prisoner by them, fled, then participated in their defeat.

— How! I answered modestly. "We know about the Markovites, too..." The taxi rolled towards the center of

Paris. — If the gentlemen have not dined, I can recommend an excellent restaurant...

— What kind of

restaurant? Oh, great food, great service! And most importantly, it is visited by German officers traveling to Spain. They live in a hotel nearby... That's someone worth a look, gentlemen! That's who does not almond with the "comrades"! Pavel and I looked at each other. Well? It is curious to observe the fascists, with whom we may soon encounter in Spain - Take it! At the entrance of the restaurant - a string of cars. Having attached the car, the driver wished to accompany us. He chose a table near a large company of young people in civilian clothes. This audience immediately attracted attention: broad shoulders, sleek faces, loud,

confident voices, haughty looks. The swastika badges were defiantly blackened on the lapels of their jackets. — German pilots!

the driver explained respectfully. They did not even think of hiding the purpose of their visit to France; publicly shared their thoughts about when they would be able to make the first sorties, how they would live and walk in Madrid. Outsiders did not exist for them. Ordinary boors, no more. However, our Markovian was of a different opinion. He looked at the warm company with loving eyes. Then he obsequiously spoke to one of the German pilots, risked some kind of compliment, and, apparently, the Nazis also liked it. there. Soon they were shaking hands with him. Mutual pats on the shoulder, clinking began ... The former Kursk landowner returned to our table beaming. - That's who I envy! he exclaimed. "If it weren't for my age, I wouldn't have stayed away either!" And suddenly it dawned on him. — Listen! he yelled. "Why don't you go to

Spain? After all, you are young!

"But we are already thinking about it," Pavel answered seriously. — Maybe we'll go. Who knows? — It's

wonderful! the driver rejoiced. - Undoubtedly ... Before leaving Paris, Anna and Pavel, I dined at another restaurant, not far from our Embassy. And it had to happen that way - three Germans from the old company occupied a table near us. They immediately recognized us. One of the youths approached me with a question. He spoke quickly, in an unfamiliar dialect, and I did not understand the meaning of the spoken words. Then the second Hitlerite entered the conversation. In broken Russian, he brazenly asked if we were Soviet pilots.

"There are many of you here," he added mockingly. "You probably don't care about that," I replied with restraint. - Are you worried? — Ho-ho! Certainly! We

need to hurry up to practice. There is nothing for you to worry about. They still will not have time to arrive before the liberation of Madrid to their Spanish communists ... And if you are pilots, heed the advice - come back. Anna inconspicuously pressed the tip of her shoe against my boot.

"You are mistaken," Pavel replied calmly. We are not pilots, but builders. We arrived at the World's Fair. The German laughed, translated Pavel's words to his friends, and they picked up his neighing.

"Would you like to see another exhibition?" - grinned Hitlerite.

— We will open an exhibition in Madrid. Moscow's weapons will be there. Russian planes.

Gut? "They say the Republicans got ahead of you," Pavel replied calmly again. - In Madrid, everyone is shown the wreckage of the "Junkers" and "Caproni". There are rumors that there are enough exhibits... We started to have lunch. Our calm infuriated the swaggering Nazis. But they did not dare to start a scandal. Moreover, the sympathies of the visitors who occupied the neighboring tables were clearly not on the side of the insolent people with the swastika. ... No, I

did not like Paris in those days. I did not find in him the charm that, say, the heroes of the novels of Orenburg found. The suburbs left a heavy impression, where half-naked and always hungry Algerian and Moroccan workers huddled in shacks. Even decently dressed beggars in the center were depressing.



## Chapter 3. Spain

We are not late! There were many people, banners and speeches in Barcelona and Valencia. But I remember the stormy, sincere meeting in the egg Port-Boo better. It seems that I can describe every face I saw then, and the joyful exclamations of the Spaniards still sound in my ears to this day ... We were not late! And Port-Bou, on behalf of the whole of Spain, welcomed new volunteers. On the same day we went to Barcelona. Railway stations were full of many flags. The national flags of Spain, the federal banners of Catalonia, the scarlet banners of the communists and socialists, the black and red banners of the anarchists created a bizarre interweaving of colors and colors. Barcelona is called the pearl of the Mediterranean. She is really wonderful. Majestic and beautiful are its buildings, embankments, boulevards, ships standing in the roadstead. The people who live in Barcelona are also beautiful. The government of Republican Spain was located in Valencia. In Valencia, I easily tracked down the Soviet volunteers who had arrived before us. One of the first people I saw was my former boss Yan Karlovich Berzin. Under an agreement with the Spanish Republic, the government of the USSR, fulfilling its internationalist duty, sent a group of military advisers here. Berzin was a senior military adviser. "The old man", as we affectionately called Berzin, although he was only 40 years old, immediately recognized me and, despite being very busy, spent a few minutes. What kept you in Paris? - he asked. "It depended not on us, but on the Embassy. "It is also important for you that there is no solid front line here,"

Jan Kalovich smiled wearily. Berzin did not develop his idea, but I understood him perfectly: going to the rear of the Nazis would be relatively easy. Like our other advisers, Berzin was very worried about the state of the Spanish army. It had neither a clear structure nor a single command. The army included separate detachments, subordinate to various parties and committees. In a conversation with me, Yan Karlovich did not hide his anxiety.

- What will you order

me? - You will teach people the technique of sabotage and tactics of guerrilla operations. Our conversation was interrupted by a phone call. Listening to the invisible interlocutor, Berzin visibly grew gloomy. I haven't seen Jan Karlovich for about three years. When we met, he immediately seemed older to me. He was clearly nervous now. It somehow did not fit with his image and even upset. In the old days, endurance never betrayed my boss. Apparently, the phone brought very bad news, if Berzin is unable to restrain his feelings. Hanging up, Jan Karlovich apologized that he could not continue the conversation.

- See you again! He tried to smile calmly. "And now, Comrade Starinov, you

will be taken to General Yvon. Everything is agreed with him. On the same day, I was assigned to study with a group of comrades.

## Chapter 4

In the group with which I studied, elderly family people gathered. They ardently sought behind enemy lines, but expected that they would be secretly thrown there for purely conspiratorial, underground work. None of them imagined that they would have to systematically go to the rear of the Nazis and, having completed the combat mission, return to the base. Such a prospect did not please my students, and I saw that you could not go far with the old people. Where can they make sorties behind enemy lines !? They can't even walk fast, they suffocate... At the headquarters, the attitude towards our group was cool, they didn't let me get any money, I had to buy the equipment and parts we needed on our own salary. We didn't even have a car to transport equipment and people to the place of employment ... General Yvon listened to me very carefully. I asserted assertively that it was necessary to advise the leadership of the Republican army to take a closer look at the equipment and material support for demolition groups.

- Mines are not defensive, but purely offensive weapons! I assured the general. Will the artillery shell hit the target? That is still unknown. And a reliable mine planted in the right place hits without a miss, and the effect of its explosion is much greater. You cannot destroy an enemy battalion with one shell, but a mine that derailed a train will destroy both the battalion and its equipment. Is it possible to neglect such a weapon? General Yvon agreed with me. "Let's organize courses to train proven

fighters for operations in the rear of the Nazis," I suggested to the general. - This is not the case for me personally. new. It is possible to create a laboratory that would provide us with special equipment, and to form at least one special battalion for operations along enemy lines of communication. "The suggestions are useful," the general

replied. — But the Republican army, alas, is just being born. And it is born in heavy agony ... You will have to work first, as they say,

handicraft; way. It is necessary to prove in practice the capabilities of your subversives ... However, soon after this conversation, we were invited to the Valencian Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Spain to see Comrade Uribes, who announced to us about the upcoming meeting with José Diaz and Dolores Ibarruri. Dolores Ibarruri, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, met with us the next day. The building of the Central Committee was guarded: the remnants of the "fifth column" were operating in the city, anarchists were outrageous. But we were let through without much formality. José Diaz, a young man with a thin intelligent face, strong hands, quick movements, asked me to state the essence of my plans. He listened carefully. He nodded his head in approval. The door opened. A woman in a black dress entered. I immediately recognized the legendary Passionaria and stood up, interrupting the presentation of my plans in mid-sentence. Dolores Ibarruri shook hands with me and put her arms around Obrucheva, now called Louise. Then she sat down with José Diaz, and they began to talk passionately among themselves. How I envied Anna, who understood Spanish! Finally José Diaz announced through an interpreter; "In the coming days, you will get everything possible, but there are many difficulties ahead. They are not easy to overcome in our conditions ... However, everything was settled very quickly. For the school of demolition, they allotted a beautiful room - a spacious mansion on the outskirts of Valencia. They gave us the necessary funds. And most importantly, the first group of young fighters arrived. There were twelve of them. It was headed by the thirty-eight-year-old captain Domin-go Ungria. He didn't just come. He arrived at the school building. For twelve people, Domingo's group had five cars and a truck.

- I think that's enough for the first time? - he asked. It was the beginning of the future 14th partisan corps was laid.

## Chapter 5

Captain Domingo of the Hispano-Suiza pulls up to a house in Beniamet [Suburb of Valencia], where the school is located. The first to meet Antonio, the eight-year-old son of Captain Domingo, flies out. "Come back now, you bastard!" shouts the captain's wife, a

plump, good-natured woman. Previously, she had one concern: to make sure that her son did not fall off the horse or fall under the hooves (Domingo is a cavalryman by profession). But since the husband began to command demolition workers, dynamite cartridges and fuses have been found in his son's pockets. Compared with them, the boy's exercises on the Andalusian horse seem to his mother a harmless exercise.

- Leave the guy alone! He has layouts and used fuses! This gives the order to his wife Domingo himself. He stepped out the front door of the mansion and greeted us with the traditional Republican gesture. Domingo is black-haired, thin and looks like an Uzbek. For his thirty-eight years, he is very mobile and seems unbalanced. what is taken for imbalance, just its inherent expansiveness. Domingo has it a little more than the norm, that's all. According to the stories of his comrades, Domingo is very brave. I believe these stories: experienced front-line soldiers treat the captain with emphatic respect. Finally, all the fighters are assembled. I'm starting classes. I try to talk less and show more. I teach how to make and place mines. How attentively my students listen to the translator! Great guys! Everyone understands that the calm on the fronts is a temporary matter. They are eager to fight. In the meantime, they use every minute to learn how to make and apply a technique that is new for them - peaceful people. ... Soon we were offered to participate in the Teruel operation. The command of the republican army quite rightly believed that the capture of Teruel by the rebels and the formation of the so-called Teruel salient were fraught with great danger. From Teruel to Valencia, where the republican government was located, a little more than a hundred kilometers in a straight line. If

the rebels and interventionists will be able to develop a successful offensive, they will break through to the sea, cut off Catalonia from the rest of Spain and go to the rear of the defenders of Madrid. The elimination of the Teruel ledge allowed the Republican troops to secure Valencia, shorten the front line and deprive the enemy of a profitable bridgehead. The intelligence data seemed reassuring: according to the latest information, the enemy did not have large forces on the Teruel ledge and did not expect decisive actions from the Republicans. Of the troops preparing for the Teruel operation, the 13th International Brigade was the most combat-ready unit. In the event of a heavy battle, one could not count on the special stamina of the anarchist columns. In the second half of December 1936, together with Captain Domingo's group of eighteen people, I went to the village of Alfambra. We loaded dynamite, tol, simple ampoule mines and wheel locks into the car with us. Our dynamite had an extremely unpleasant property: it exploded without fail when the first bullet hit. We had to verify this at our impromptu training ground near Valencia. I tried making dynamite safe. As a result, the phlegmatized dynamite of my manufacture actually turned out to be completely safe: it did not want to explode either from the detonator cap or even from the initiating charge. Involuntarily, I had to use what was given. Alfambra, like Teruel, is located at an altitude of nine hundred meters above sea level. We had to drive more than two hundred kilometers, and one hundred and fifty of them on mountain roads. The day turned out to be sunny, and the houses of the village, built of stone, seemed to have just been whitewashed. Soldiers scurried through the streets. Local residents, especially children, looked with curiosity at the Republican troops arriving here. The next morning, a siren wailed alarmingly: air raid alert! The cars that had accumulated in the village began to disperse. Our driver Pele was not at a loss: he quickly started his Ford and took it out into the field. The bombing was carried out from a great height and did not cause significant damage to the troops. Because of the crowding in Alfambra, Domingo set off in search of a convenient place for us in the neighboring villages. In the end, we settled in Orios and from there we went to the commander of the section. The commander of the Teruel station, an anarchist adorned with weapons, received us very warmly.

unkindly. He was very self-confident. He announced in a thunderous voice that the offensive he had prepared would be historic! When the commander fell silent, Domingo asked permission to state our plan of action. The captain offered the services of a group of demolition men to destroy the railway and highways in the Teruel-Calamocha section and organize the collapse of trains with enemy troops. The commander waved his hand dismissively. No, he does not believe in the possibility of a successful collapse of enemy echelons ... Demolition groups must be ready to destroy enemy communications, to capture "languages", and there will be time - well, let them try to blow up the railway ... Having picked up two guides, we returned to Orios and found a very picturesque picture in their unit: who was warming himself by the fireplace, who smoked. sitting on a box of explosives, and Rubio immediately made a fuse. People clearly neglected the security measures for handling mine explosives. Who, if not me, is to blame for this?.. The first sabotage The operation began later than planned. The commander again called Domingo to him and ordered to destroy all communication lines fifteen to twenty kilometers north of Teruel, as well as to blow up the road and railway connecting Teruel with Calatayud. "Are you going with the bombers too?" Obrucheva asked me. - Yes. Necessary. Are people ill-prepared? "That's not the point. What

impression might the fighters get if I stay...? - Should I wait here in Orios?

"Well, not necessarily in Orios..." "I'm sorry,

but I don't agree. I am your translator and will be by your side. The statement was

made in such a categorical tone that I had to agree. Hearing that Louise

was coming with us, Captain Domingo raised his hands in despair: "Women don't go to the rear!" They're coming, Domingo. Prepare people. Let's take twelve people. Six will remain in reserve ... Loaded with explosives, we went to the positions of the company, from the location of which we were to

infiltrate the rear of the rebels. The Demomen changed their leather shoes for - rope sandals - alpargatas. You won't get far in the mountains in boots. All armed with pistols and knives. In addition, Rubio carries a light machine gun just in case. They came out bright. In front of the guides, behind them - Captain Domingo, me and Luisa, then - the rest. On the backs of each - white patches with rotten things tied to them, so as not to lose each other in the dark. Domingo and I have binoculars. We carefully inspect the area. At night, we specify the signals "Attention" and "Stop". Night falls quickly in the mountains. Next to the guides are now walking Antonio and Rubio. Enemy posts somewhere nearby. You have to move completely silently. But our people are not sufficiently prepared for night crossings. An amazing feeling arises when crossing the front line at night. It seems that you are walking on a narrow bridge over an abyss. Stumble and - the end ... But now the front line is already behind. We walk more cheerfully and by three o'clock in the morning we reach the Teruel-Calamocha highway. They lay down about a hundred meters from her canvas. Relaxed, had a bite to eat. Divided into two groups. Fighters led by Antonio Buinrago will mine the railroad. Domingo's group is to place charges to blow up twenty telegraph poles on the highway and blow up the bridge. The highway was wide and paved. The reinforced concrete bridge is extremely durable. Our explosives are obviously not enough to greatly destroy it. The railway is about 500 meters away. Not a soul around. But we have very little time: explosions will begin soon. Fortunately, the local bridge turned out to be easily accessible for sabotage. They worked standing at the bottom of a dried-up stream. The charges were perfectly installed on the side on metal beams. Having mined the bridge, they hurriedly set to telegraph poles. As always, in a hurry, something does not come out right away. And time is running out. They set fire to the fuses of the charges on the bridge and began to retreat. The first explosions went off as we reached the highway. Bright flashes of light cut through the darkness of the night. Added a step. And it's good that they didn't hesitate! There were also explosions on the highway. Where there was a reinforced concrete bridge, the flames flew out into the sky. The earth trembled from the explosion... There was jubilation at the collection point, but it was too early to rejoice. I was afraid that the enemy would throw



soldier and start the pursuit. We saw the lights of the cars hurrying to the damaged area! Should have left immediately. On the way back, we set off lightly. Satisfied with luck, people did not feel tired. Already with the sun, we went to the location of the republican troops. Domingo sent the demolition men to rest, and he, together with me, hurried to report to the commander. Only in the afternoon we were received. The commander, waving his arms, began to reproach us for having done little, "only making noise."

The enemy is getting reinforcements! His connection works! the commander yelled. Domingo replied sharply that the task had been completed accurately and on time. Our artillery adviser N. N. Voronov, who was present at this conversation, seized the moment and said:

"Understand the condition of the commander. The offensive is not developing according to plan, the troops

suffer heavy losses. "But why are we here?" Could a small group of demolitionists ensure the success

of the offensive? - Of course not. However, the commander kept pressing on Domingo: "You apparently didn't blow up anything and didn't destroy the connection at all!" Luckily for us, one of the guides turned out to be an anarchist. He began to yell at the commander, arguing that the bridges had been blown up. Desperately gesticulating, the guide showed how the debris flew. I don't know if he convinced the commander, or he was simply tired of bickering, but we were finally released, ordered to prepare for a new sortie. I was very depressed. Of course, the fate of the offensive did not depend on the actions of our group, but we could do more. They could, if they showed more independence at their own peril and risk. Indeed, why was it necessary to undermine the wire communication poles when everyone knows that the rebels have field radios? And it was not at all difficult for the Nazis to restore these damages on the line. When I returned to my students, their initial excitement had passed. The soldiers looked tired. Almost all of them had worn

legs. "Todos esta bien[3]," Domingo lied bravely, looking at the questioning faces of his comrades. "But more is expected of us. And now - sleep! The captain didn't want to discourage the bombers. But it is unlikely that his frown hid from them. "But what's the point anyway?" Rubio asked for everyone.

— In what? Domingo exploded. - Teruel was not occupied, that's what! 3 All right. The soldiers looked at each other. The reason was good enough to explain the bad mood of the commander. By car on the rear of the Nazis Despite the initial failures, the command continued its attempts to capture Teruel. The International Brigade broke through to the city itself, followed by other republican units. The enemy has not yet counterattacked. This gave hope for success. On the second day of the offensive, the bombers were ordered to go back to the rear of the rebels. Captain Domingo considered. People have worn legs, and they walk more than forty kilometers! Pepe calmly offered to use cars for the sortie. Rubio was the first to respond: "You must be out of your mind... But Pepe did not deign to answer him. He

calmly convinced the interpreter and Domingo that traveling by car was not at all dangerous... And in which case it was easy to get away in cars! Another driver, Juan, also liked the prospect of such a sortie. He warmly supported Pepe. Domingo also caught fire with a new idea, and we decided to take a chance. At noon, three cars drove into the woods in no man's land and headed for the Teruel-Calamocha highway. At first they were shaking along dry land, overgrown with bushes on the slopes, and four kilometers from their positions they jumped out onto a field road and added speed. Silent hills around. The stunted grass turns yellow under the sun. Lonely boulders darken in the distance. No animal, no flock of sheep. Only a few clouds hover high in the sky. A squat shepherd's hut (cortijo), made of stones, is visible on level ground for a whole kilometer. We stop in a shelter, send reconnaissance. We get a signal: we can go! The hut has not a soul. A saddled horse nibbles the grass in the distance. Cautiously raising her head, she shies away from the fighters in fear. Gore is visible on the saddle, We look into the hut - it's empty. There seems to be some kind of tragedy here. Which? And how can this threaten us? Having driven the cars into the shade of the trees growing near the cortijo, we carefully examine the area through binoculars. All around is calm. You can move on. But we didn't drive even two kilometers, as they noticed a group of armed people on the slope of the nearest mountain. An attempt to slip through and hide around a bend in the road failed. Shots fired, bullets whistled.

The fighters clearly follow the command. After getting out of the vehicles, they lay down and returned fire. Juan fires short bursts from a light machine gun. It seems that the machine gun in his hands is trembling with hatred. Our fire is very dense and, apparently, not ineffective. The enemy is silent. People on the side of the mountain begin to rush and retreat. But for some reason they are retreating ... to the east, towards the republican positions. Domingo yells for our people to stop firing. What the hell?! Maybe we ran into our scouts? Why didn't anyone warn us about the possibility of such a meeting? The headquarters claimed that there was not a single republican unit behind the front line ... We raise the red scarf. The group on the mountainside answers us in kind. Juan asks to be sent for negotiations. We agree and wait with bated breath to see if the unknown send their representative to meet Juan. Whether a fatal single shot will thunder. Juan keeps walking... A man appears from the bushes and begins to cautiously descend towards our representative. Here they converge. A minute later, Juan turns around and waves his hand cheerfully. We rise from the ground, get out of the bushes and the "enemy". Everything cleared up very quickly: we ran into a reconnaissance group from one of the anarchist columns. Scold? Argue? Neither they nor we are to blame for the absurd skirmish. Having found out from the scouts that there are no fascist detachments ahead to the very road, we again set off. And after half an hour, having disguised cars in the bush, we observe the movement of enemy vehicles along the Teruel-Calamocha highway. We can see the lifeless railway. The trains seem to run very infrequently. There are no guards on the highway. Mainly single cars go along it. Rarely appear columns of ten or fifteen trucks, sometimes with soldiers, sometimes with luggage. It never occurred to the Nazi drivers that there were Republican cars on the road. After waiting for the next column of cars loaded with some boxes to approach, we open friendly fire. Some trucks slid off the road. The drivers jumped into the ditches. One car caught fire. The rest gave gas and hurried to escape. In order to delay a possible pursuit, we, having driven off the highway, set in a rut a contactor from a matchbox (exactly the same one that I showed Tukhachevsky a year ago), and laid in roadside bushes

solid charge. This precaution was not superfluous. Soon we heard the sound of a dull explosion. Apparently, the Nazis ran into a land mine and refrained from pursuit ... Our sortie was considered successful, but I returned in a sad mood. After all, I was convinced with my own eyes that the rebels quickly repaired the damage from our mines and land mines, not only on the highway, but also on the railway. It turns out that the commander of the section was right? Demolition workers really do not yet bring the troops fighting heavy battles near Teruel the benefit that we expected ... The next day, Captain Domingo and Antonio again led two groups of miners behind enemy lines.

## Chapter 6. 1937

The first loss A new year has come, 1937. On New Year's Eve, we moved from Orios to Alfambra. In the middle of the way we were detained by a column of anarchists and demanded to return the cars. Domingo flew out of the cockpit like an angry lion. Clicking the shutter, he shouted for the anarchists to clear the way. Juan and Rubio flanked the commander, weapons at the ready. Pele pulled out a grenade. The anarchists retreated. We were followed by curses and threats. In Alfambra, as always, the reception was not warm. Teruel continued to remain in the hands of the Nazis. Anarchists dodged, looking for the guilty. Reproaches rained down on our heads.

"The rebels are bringing in reserves by rail, and you are doing nothing!" growled the commander. He was wrong. But there was no point in making excuses... Domingo knew that our people were unable to walk: after a fifty-kilometer march, most of the legs were beaten to blood. Not risking once again delving into the rear of the rebels on cars, he nevertheless tried to make his way to the railway with twenty fighters on horseback. But, having never reached the goal, his "group returned back that same night. And then the order was to withdraw from the front and leave for Valencia. The captain's wife invited everyone to the table.

"Let's wait for Juan," I said. - He will close the car and now he will rise Outside the windows shots hit. At the entrance, near the varnished Ford, we saw our Juan. A dark, thick patch was spreading across the asphalt around him. The right hand, as it were, protected the broken heart ... The killers were already pursued. We, too, rushed after the fleeing crowd. The detainees fought back, shouted. Domingo knocked out a pistol from one of them, the second was disarmed by the fighters who came to the rescue. At the headquarters of the nearest unit, it turned out that both raiders belonged

to an anarchist column. - We needed a car, but your driver resisted ... These bastards did not even consider themselves guilty! Juan was buried

another day. Relatives put his coffin in a niche in the stone wall, and the cemetery worker cemented the hole.

"They want to talk to you," Obrucheva whispered. "I am the brother of the deceased, Vicente," the young man introduced himself, firmly squeezing my hand. - Take me with you! I'll try to replace Juan... Bullfight Today bullfight is a bullfight. Franco's thugs are standing just outside Madrid, having captured part of the University campus in November 1936. Hundreds of soldiers have been lost near Teruel. But ... today - bullfighting! In Poterna, on the outskirts of the city, in a wasteland behind the mansion where our school is located, shots are heard at night. It is the anarchists who deal with their victims. They say they are shooting counter-revolutionaries. In fact, anarchists also kill the people they robbed. But ... today - bullfighting! Enemy aircraft are increasingly bombing Valencia. On the streets are hungry, exhausted refugees. Some places are tight with food. The enemy is preparing an offensive on the southern front. But ... today - bullfighting! Today there is a bullfight, and Captain Domingo with his family, Antonio with his young wife and brother, the fiery-haired Rubio, little Pele, even Juan's inconsolable brother Vicente, who has become a regular driver in our group, are all rushing to the center, where a motley crowd of Valencians has long been flowing: they are unable to refuse the pleasure of looking at their favorite bullfighters. I, despite all persuasion, stay at home. One bullfight is enough for me. I don't want to witness the beautifully orchestrated murder of innocent animals anymore. One thing still worries me - the exceptional carelessness of some demolition workers in handling explosives. Dynamite that explodes from friction or a strong blow, don't even give them a hand. Having found time, I managed to go during these days to Cartagena to the naval base. Having handed over to N. G. Kuznetsov a note from Berzin, he obtained from the sailors five depth charges with trinitrotoluene. Sailors are great! The rebels fail to block the coast of Republican Spain. The warships of the republic selflessly carry out patrol service. Despite the piratical actions of the Italian fleet, they carry out numerous cargo ships to Cartagena and other ports. Cartagena, founded before our era (at that time it was called Carthage), proudly keeps its military glory. N. G. Kuznetsov complained that we were disarming him:

depth charges are needed to fight submarines. But, having learned that tol would be used for operations behind enemy lines, he himself settled the necessary formalities with the command. He asked only one thing: not to forget about their airfields when sorties to the rear of the rebels. I brought the bombs to Valencia, and we smelted more than two tons of tol from them. Occupation painstaking, dangerous, but necessary. Now we are provided with explosives much more reliable than dynamite. And the day before yesterday I received a salary and bought several pairs of cheap pocket watches. Now I'm making clock switches. While the bombers are having fun at the bullfight, I'll probably finish this job too. However, Teruel has tarnished our reputation greatly... The Domingo group is still in the position of a stepson. The commander has to worry about food and gasoline. The detachment is being replenished Data on the preparation of the enemy on the southern front have been confirmed. The rebels began to attack. Domingo's group was ordered to urgently depart for the southern front. Classes with beginners will be conducted by six "old men". Everyone else is on the road. We take with us about a ton of tol, half a ton of dynamite, all our new mines, thorns for puncturing car tires. We stuff an old truck with this property and five cars, obtained by hook or by crook, to failure. The car with dynamite, as always, is driven by little Pele. My translator shows me with her eyes the new cook of the group - Rosalina. We have a girl recently. She is a dressmaker by profession, but she has mastered the mine technique very well. Noticing that the fighters were trying at random, sometimes dry, she sacrificed her romantic dream to her comrades and agreed to cook. "On one condition, Domingo!" she said. "You will still let me go on missions. Rosalina is

now getting into Rubio's car. A stocky, roguish-eyed Andalusian, Miguel, settles down next to him. Looks like we'll have another newlywed couple soon. Signora Rosalina waves after us, holding high her stern, immediately darkened face. Our convoy of cars breaks out of Valencia. Destination - Jaen. I don't know how long it would take us to get to Albacete, the first big city on our route, if not for the excellent asphalt road. There are many good highways in Spain. The density of their times, four exceeds the density

railway tracks Now the motorway simply saves us: prolonged January rains have begun; the sky seemed to cave in under the weight of the clouds; the grass, nailed down by the downpour, sticks to the soggy roadsides. The dark deserted fields swelled with moisture. How different this trip is from a trip to Cartagena! Then the sun was shining, in Alicante I even swam, but here I involuntarily wrap my jacket and pull my beret deeper. There, on the branches and under the trees, citrus were blazing. Here the fruits only shine dimly through the foliage dark from the rain, and perhaps that is why it seems that there are fewer of them. Yes, and deserted fields tune in a sad way. Or maybe everything around seems so gloomy because I'm nervous? Khaen must become the Toulon of the Demolitionists! If here we do not justify the hopes of the command, it means that I and all our fighters eat the bread of the republic for nothing ... Here is Albacete. Here is a short stop. The soldiers are warming up, inspecting the car. On the street, I came face to face with an old acquaintance - I am N. Smushkevich. We had not seen each other for more than a year and, of course, did not assume that we would meet not in Moscow, not in Leningrad, not in Belarus, not in one of the Black Sea resorts, after all, but thousands of kilometers from our homeland, in a small, but now famous city of Spain. "I won't let you go anywhere today!" Smushkevich said decisively. — And what about the bombers? Usually we are put on allowance by those units

in whose sector we operate ... - We will arrange it, - Smushkevich reassured me. - I think

the Spanish command will not refuse a small request to its aviation adviser. Let's go to me! Smushkevich was not denied his request. We

settled the people, dined, sent Louise and Rosalina to rest, and sat down with Smushkevich near the high smoldering

fireplace.

"This is how we fight," he sighed. "Few, damn few planes. Our falcons fight you know how. Yes, there are few of them ... And how are you? I told about my experiences in Teruel, about my plans, and then admitted that it is difficult in our business to work with an interpreter.

- Listen. We have an international brigade replenished here. There are many Poles and Czechs among the guys. Surely someone knows Spanish, huh? Today we will find out this case and find volunteers for the team



demolitionists. Having learned that people who know Russian are needed to work behind enemy lines, the first to come to us were two Yugoslavs - Ivan Harish and Ivan Karbovents. Ivan Harish was squat and dense, Ivan Karbovents was thin and tall. Comrades in the international brigade jokingly called friends Pat and Patachon. Subsequently, in the detachment of Domingo, Harish and Karbovanz were given the nicknames Juan Pequeño (small) and Juan Grande (large). Both friends are former sailors. Both knew English, French, Spanish and Russian, and Ivan Grande also spoke Italian. Following the Yugoslavs, the handsome, mocking Czech Jan Tikhiy came to us. Then came the American Jew Alex, the Bulgarians Pavel and Vastlin. And then we were simply at a loss: there was literally no end to the international brigades who wanted to beat the enemy in his rear. Germans, Austrians, French, Finns,

Italians, Hungarians - they all came to us. - We must take it! Captain Domingo frantically whispered to me, his eyes twinkling with excitement. - Look at the people! Where else can you find these guys? And when will we be replenished?! I also did not want to refuse this gift of fate. Having talked at headquarters with the comrades who were recruiting the international brigades, I received in Albacete not two translators, but more than twenty excellent fighters.

## Chapter 7

The city of Wayen Khaen clung to the foot of the mountain and seemed to be buried in greenery. But the first impression was deceiving. Gardens and groves only surrounded the city. Already on the outskirts we were met by a harsh stone. In the narrow gorges of the medieval streets there is neither a bush nor a blade of grass. Only in some places in the center the grass in the squares timidly turned green, and there rose in orderly rows of evergreen trees, which people carefully looked after. Strange was this petrified city, which had almost sixty thousand inhabitants. With the frenzy of a fanatical monk, he pushed away the tender branches of orange and tangerine orchards stretched out towards him, stubbornly refusing to listen to the stirring rustle of olive trees. But the inhabitants of Jaen did not at all resemble monks. The front line was only twenty-five to thirty kilometers away, and they noisily enjoyed all the blessings of life available. I think that the wonderful Spanish music penetrated in the evenings even behind the high walls of the huge nunnery... In Jaen, Domingo and the translator and I immediately went to the provincial committee of the Spanish Communist Party, whose secretary was Comrade Nemesio Pazuelo, a member of the Central Committee of the KPI. He greeted us warmly and introduced us to another secretary who was right there, Comrade Cristoval Valenzuela. All issues related to the stay of a group of miners were quickly resolved: accommodation, communication with unit commanders, material support. Comrades from the provincial committee of the KPI prepared a room for us right next to the convent. Looking at the monastery, spread out wide almost in the very center of the city, Vicente judiciously remarked:

“Such a neighborhood will not interfere with us. Fascist aircraft will not drop bombs here! But he was wrong. During the first raid, a bomb hit a house next to us ... On the same day, it seems, we received very important information for us about the existence of several partisan detachments in the rear of the Francoists in the provinces of Cordoba and Granada. A large partisan detachment settled as

we were told in the Minas de Río Tinto mine area. His fighters made daring raids on the enemy day after day. However, there was no permanent connection with this detachment or with others. They did not have time to create an organized underground in the rear of the rebels. The population of some cities and villages completely left for the territory of the republic. And yet we believed that our units would be able to operate successfully. In fact, there is no solid front. In the mountains there are plenty of natural hiding places where small groups of miners can easily hide during the day. Moreover, many lines of communication important for the enemy are so close to his forward positions that sorties can be safely made during the night. This is what I told military adviser Kolman, whom I visited on the very first day of my arrival in Jaen. A wonderful comrade, calm and reasonable, like almost all Latvians, Kolman completely agreed with me.

"The Domingo group will have to operate in the regions of Granada, Cordoba and Peñarroy," he said, leaning over the map and tracing the named points with a pencil. "The front command demands that you deprive the enemy of the opportunity to systematically bring up reserves. It is also necessary to divert as many fascist units as possible to guard the lines of communication. At the same time, the demolitionists are entrusted with reconnaissance and the capture of "tongues". Can you? - It is easier for ours to blow up several cars or let them

run under  
slope military echelon than to capture the "tongue."

- What about organizing explosions at warehouses and airfields? - We can do it! Domingo exclaimed ardently. "Then let's clarify what you have at your disposal and what needs to be done first of all ... The military adviser threw away his pencil, sat down and rubbed his high forehead with a bald patch:

"I must admit, I'm tired," he smiled guiltily. - A lot of worries and troubles, Sea Brotherhood The time spent in Haen was not in vain. Now we had an impressive force compared to the Teruel operation and could operate as part of many groups. Domingo reported to the front command that the soldiers were ready for combat work. The bombers were given several tasks at once. The bombers were heading for Cordoba, and for Granada, and for the area north of Cordoba. It was necessary to blow up the railway and

highway bridges, organize the collapse of military trains, undermine enemy vehicles, disable aircraft at airfields and industrial enterprises working for the Falangists. Separate groups were instructed to find people behind enemy lines who were sympathetic to the republic and ready to help in the destruction of important military facilities. The positions of the republican troops from the north approached Granada for eight to ten kilometers. They covered the city in a semicircle. At the disposal of the rebels at that time there was one railway linking the garrison of Granada with Seville, Cadiz and other major centers occupied by the Nazis in southern Spain. In their hands was also a motorway going west. On the instructions of the command, special units were supposed to blow up a bridge on the railway about ten kilometers northwest of Granada one of the following nights and deprive the military industry of the city of electricity. We arrived at our destination in the middle of the day. The cars had to be left a few kilometers away. And not at all because they feared a raid or shelling. Due to the long rains, the unpaved roads became completely impassable. We have not yet unloaded the explosives from the vehicles. Reliable guards were on duty near them, and I led the rest of the soldiers to the command post of the battalion that was defending the area indicated to us. Getting stuck in the mud, we finally found this checkpoint four kilometers from the highway. The battalion commander, a corpulent forty-five-year-old man, a former sailor, knew about the arrival of the bombers and was waiting for us. He was not embarrassed by cautious allusions to the fact that we are tight with food.

- And I will feed and warm! I didn't prepare villas for recreation ... You will spend the night without fireplaces and without mattresses! he joked, and, looking point-blank at Juan Grande, he asked: "Sailor?" The battalion commander was overjoyed that he had guessed Juan's profession. They clapped each other on the shoulder, switched to "you" without circumlocution, started to remember familiar ships, ports, some unknown owners of taverns and taverns from London to Lima. And I realized: here we will not be lost. A sailor will not let a sailor down, he will break into a cake, but he will do what is needed! And so it happened later. The battalion commander provided us with allowances, picked up excellent guides and eve

fighters to participate in group sorties. True, at first he upset us: it turned out that the battalion was not searching. Why,

Commander? The sailor shrugged his

shoulders: - But ah order! It's not the first time we've heard this damned "no order" in Spain. Enemy reconnaissance will have to be carried out, as at Teruel, independently, and we put up with this. In the evening, the battalion commander took me and several other demolition men to the front line of the trenches. The trenches were not dug, the slopes, where the ground was unstable, were not fortified, and in many places they slumped and collapsed. Water sloshed under his boots. We got out of the communication channel and went on horseback. The sky was impenetrably black, but below, in the basin, hundreds of bright lights shone like diamonds. The battalion commander stopped, nodded in the direction of the luminous dots

and, pulling up his waist belt, said: "Granada... Hold on, bastards!.. Sabotage on the bridge." The death of Miguel As night fell, our group, loaded with explosives, quietly passed the battalion's outposts. Antonio left before dark. The battalion commander escorted the demolition men to the outposts and excitedly wished them good luck. Darkness. Silence. More dirt sticks to shoes with every step. Ditches underfoot, some furrows, stones. And ahead, below us, the same shining lights of Granada. Granada! Not a single city in Spain is sung by Russian poets with such love as you! Immortal Pushkin dreamed of your beauties. Today, wonderful poems have been dedicated to you by Mikhail Svetlov. For a Russian person, Granada has become a symbol of passionate love and great courage... People are tired. Need to take a break. I ask Jan Tikhoy to once again remind the fighters what to do in the event of an enemy attack while working on the bridge. Probable danger threatens us from the road. Ten kilometers from the bridge, there is a strong garrison of rebels, reinforcements can quickly arrive from there. We must act quickly and absolutely silently ... Unnoticed by anyone, we reached the bridge over the river Khenil. Scouts reported: the bridge is not guarded. The evening passenger train from Granada had already passed. The next one was expected in the morning. This suited us; the possibility of its collapse on mines was excluded. Kolman warned: it is impossible to undermine passenger trains ... At ten-thirty, the bombers entered the bridge. Some

a man with Juan Grande rushed to the lower belts of the farm, others began to tie charges of tola to the upper belt. Sanchez with a group of fighters went to set mines under the rails. We work in silence: conversations are prohibited. One charge, the second, the third... Well, here's another one, and that's it! And then the silence was cut by a shot from the side of the highway. A moment - and another rifle shot. A rocket took off into the sky. Whitish light flooded the railway embankment, the bridge, and I saw Juan Grande's fighters running, throwing explosive charges. The rocket went off. The darkness immediately thickened. We have to blow up the bridge! But it's too late. We were illuminated by the second rocket. Invisible arrows opened heavy rifle fire. The demolition men rushed behind the embankment - there the bullets would not reach them. The bridge was empty, and the mining was not over. It's good that the charges are full, not dynamite: a random bullet could send everyone to the next world. Vicente ignites the incendiary pipes. Together we insert them into the charges and only after that we also crawl behind the embankment. The entire unit is already there. Paramedic bandages three wounded. The enemy continues to illuminate the area with rockets and occasionally shoots at the bridge. We must go further! We must cross the highway before the rebels get reinforcements. We quickly run back along the embankment, jump over the railroad tracks with a jerk, and after another three minutes we cross the highway. We must force the enemy to give up pursuit, to divert him from our group! We leave on the way delayed action grenades. A bright flame shoots up on the bridge, a strong explosion shakes the air. The bridge, unfortunately, received minor damage. He didn't even sag. But the explosion cheered up the fighters - they didn't go for nothing! The Nazis, who were chasing us in cars, apparently reached the bridge. The noise of the engines stopped, and after two or three minutes heavy machine guns began to work furiously from the embankment. The fighters, as one, rolled

into the ditch. I waved my hand in a northerly direction: - Crawl there! Taking a breath, he looked back. Rebel soldiers ran across the field and along the road, shooting in our direction. A new chain of fascists appeared from behind the embankment. Where did they come from? .. About two hundred meters from the ditch, we again placed delayed-action grenades and began to retreat to a single house with a garden. At thi

the road itself. The enemy fire in our direction weakened. We rejoiced, but prematurely. Until now, we were hidden from the light of rockets by olive trees, and now we had to cross a bare field ... Two mines and five more time-delayed grenades were planted in the garden near an empty house. Got out into the field. Either it was covered with stubble, or the ground here was rocky, but it became easier to walk. And in the garden, grenade explosions were already roaring, shooting began. Fascists, - apparently, surrounded Do not answer the fire! .. Soon the enemy, the house. lost us. I decided to check if everyone had left. It turned out that Jan the Quiet and Rosalina's fiancé, Miguel, were missing. Rubio went in search of the stragglers. He didn't have to wait long. In the darkness, rotten things tied to clothes flickered like fireflies. Rubio and Quiet brought Miguel in their arms. A paramedic rushed to the wounded man, but Miguel no longer needed the services of medicine. The lights of Granada, which served as our guide, suddenly disappeared. The city seemed to have sunk into the ground. We heard the dull sound of an explosion. It was Antonio's group that worked!.. Soldiers from the battalion, who had recently seen us off, arrived in time. They carefully accepted Miguel's heavy body. The

battalion commander shoved a flask of wine into my hands. We thought you couldn't get out! Sabotage at the hydroelectric power station in Granada Antonio returned an hour later. His group suffered no casualties. Taking a sip of the battalion commander's inexhaustible flask, the radiant Antonio excitedly told how they managed to put out the light in Granada. Through the positions of the enemy, the bombers leaked imperceptibly. We arrived at the power plant at exactly the right time. Both buildings of the station - the upper one, near the dam, and the lower one, at the end of the water pipes - were brightly lit. The silhouettes of armed men loomed in the distance. But there were no guards near the water pipes. Taking Pedro with him and ordering that the rest of the fighters cover them with fire if necessary, Antonio crawled to the water pipes. Having mined both pipes and placing five-kilogram tola charges on each, Antonio and Pedro crawled to their own; the incendiary tubes were supposed to detonate the charges in five or six minutes. The two explosions went off almost simultaneously. The lights in Granada went out. There wa

"We were really worried about you," Antonio finished. - Heard - a whole battle broke out near the bridge ... What is there

happened?

- We've been found. Miguel is killed. Three are wounded. - Miguel? .. Antonio did not bring the flask that was raised to his mouth. In our house in Jaen, everything breathed peace and quiet. Delighted, Anna Obrucheva loudly called:

- Rose! Rosa! .. They are back! | - Wait! I tried stop translator. But the radiant Rose was already at the door.

Salud, Rudolf! How fast are you! I didn't even have time to finish Miguel's shirt! Looking at me, Rosa understood everything without words. She crumpled up her half-finished shirt and hid her tear-stained face in it.



## Chapter 8

I sit over the yellowed newspaper sheets and remember ... Here are the messages of a particularly memorable March for me: "On the eleventh of March, the republican fighters on the southern front blew up the railway bridges in Alcolea and Las Pedroches, paralyzing the the republican echelons movement of the military" "On March 12, of the enemy ... the troops successfully repelled enemy attacks near Pozoblanco ... "" The defeat of the rebels and interventionists near Guadalajara. A wonderful victory for the Republican troops! A large number of prisoners and trophies ... "" On the twenty-fifth of March, a train with ammunition near Montoro was blown up by republican fighters. my spring sun-drenched road from Jaen through Andujar to the monastery of la Virgen de la Cabeza [Monastery of the Head of the Holy Virgin. ] to the battalion command post. Vicente accelerates the car, we rush past the "holy place" in fourth speed. Belated shots rumble from the monastery walls. Soon I met with the commander of the southern fronts, Colonel Perez Solas. I see the ancient buildings of the small town of Andujar, as if merged into a single whole. I see a room with a fireplace, where we are received by the commander of the southern front, Colonel Perez Salas. He is tall, fit, old-fashioned gallant. In the past, this is a regular officer of the Spanish army. One of the few officers who remained loyal to the Republic. And now Perez Salas is invested with great powers. Politely bowing his graying head, the colonel listens to Obrucheva, who is translating my speech. He is very friendly with the translator (she is a lady, and he is a Spaniard!) and is very dry with me. Well! If the matter in question were personal, I would not have tried to prove to this self-confident man that a small group of demolition men could easily derail an echelon with an enemy infantry battalion or tanks. The Colonel smokes, obviously nervous. Already at the very beginning of the conversation, Perez Salas made sure that I had no doubts about his negative

attitude towards military advisers and volunteers, from whatever countries they come. He, the commander of the southern front, believes that the republic does not need volunteers or advisers. All you need is a weapon. If there were weapons and equipment, the Republican army would have defeated Franco without the help of volunteers. All this was expressed very categorically and without bluntness. But I deliberately left the colonel's judgments without attention, and here I am proving to him something that seems to need no proof at all. We are served coffee. The Colonel begins to ask about the Soviet Union. Taking this opportunity, I again start talking about my own, referring to the experience near Teruel. I try to explain that disruption of communication lines, raids on bridges are less appropriate than the collapse of military trains:

- I know that the command expects to use demolition men mainly for raids on bridges, stations, enemy ammunition depots and airfields. Of course, if ordered, we will carry out all this. But the losses in people will be significant, and the effectiveness of such actions is doubtful. In any case, this is not at all the same as destroying enemy equipment and soldiers during transportation. Arranging the collapse of military trains with the help of mines, you act for sure ... Perez Salas resolutely pushes a cup of coffee: - I categorically forbid making crashes in areas where there is

passenger traffic. Mistakes are possible, and then public opinion will turn against us. Fascist propaganda will not miss an opportunity to depict partisan actions as banditry.

"What public opinion are you talking about, Colonel?" Can there really be at least one decent person in the world who dares to reproach the republic for something? I hope you have not forgotten that the fascist bastard destroyed thousands of civilians in Madrid and other cities?! We are not fascists!

We have no right to put civilians at risk! "Excuse me, but I don't know who

you care about?" All civilians left the frontline for the territory of the republic. Who now travels in passenger trains? I am convinced that the rebels use rail transport in the front line by no means in order to take civilians to picnics.

- Nevertheless... -

When aircraft bomb warehouses, stations, even enemy trains, this is also associated with a danger to the population. After all, there is a war going on! "Aviation

is one thing, demolitionists are another... In short, I categorically forbid organizing crashes in areas where there is passenger traffic. Your mines do not distinguish trains with civilians from military trains. Let the bombers better blow up bridges, stations and fire at military trains ...

Domingo only grinned when he learned about the results of the conversation with the commander. - Let's see! he says cryptically. - will have to act

behind enemy lines And there are other laws ...

After the meeting scene with Perez Salas, I see a different picture. A new sun-drenched road. We are still making our way in our Mercedes through the oncoming flow of refugees. The enemy is advancing on Pozoblanco, and the inhabitants are fleeing from the fascist monsters. Creaking, crawling high-wheeled, cart-like wagons. They contain crying, disheveled children and exhausted women. Mules twitch their ears anxiously, the eyes of these meek animals are filled with fear. It seems that even the animals in Spain have begun to understand the dangers of good weather. Darkened with anger, Vicente brought us to Andujar. The town, covered with a thin veil of brick dust, is unrecognizable. The house where Colonel Perez Salas and I spoke to no longer exists... The raid has just ended. Desperately screaming women, looking for children. One of them kneels in the middle of the street and sends curses to the sky. We're unloading dynamite and handing over vehicles to transport the wounded. Near the dilapidated house, a small group of people are wielding crowbars, makeshift wagons and shovels. It is commanded by the secretary of the Andujar committee of the party Jimenez. From under the ruins comes the cry of a child, groans are heard.

- Enough! Jimenez shouts and climbs into the hole that has formed. A few agonizing minutes pass. Jimenez feeds a sobbing boy of three or four years into the gap between the stones. The child was saved, and the mother was already dead ... Pele finds us only an hour later. He transported eight seriously injured children and women to the hospital. Two children died on the way.

"I'll still reckon with Franco!" - Pele screams, and I understand: he screams because he is afraid to cry. "I'll settle my score with his filthy swine yet!" I will force the killers to eat their own dung! ... And yet, during the next meeting, Colonel Perez Salas confirms his prohibition. It turns out that enemy battalions, tanks, guns will calmly follow the front line, so that later they can destroy republican fighters and civilians? Sabotage in the tunnel In the spring of 1937, republican military partisans made many sorties on the southern front to the rear of the enemy who had begun the offensive. They even managed to create several hidden bases on the territory of the rebels. The roads and military installations of the Falangists were quite far from the front line. Demolitionists had to spend a lot of time approaching them and often spend two or three days there. Carefully camouflaged bases in the very rear of the enemy allowed our people not only to hide in the daytime, but also to carry out several operations at once, without returning each time through the front line. We set up our base near Adamus in the premises of an abandoned dairy and cheese factory, surrounded by dense olive groves. The presence of this base allowed small groups to reach the Peñarroya-Cordoba or Montoro-Cordoba railways in one night, mine them and disappear without a trace from their pursuers. There were no residents near the plant: all the peasants left for the territory of the republic. The factory looked deserted. We had a perfect view of the highway leading from Córdoba to the hydroelectric plant located three kilometers from us. Enemy vehicles passed quietly along the highway below. The military were walking around on the dam, and none of them even suspected that they were close to us. And we watched... Of course, there was a danger of detection. But we were very careful. Reliable combat guards guarded all possible approaches to the factory. On the most dangerous paths leading to the base, guided stone-throwers were installed, which were reinforced by automatic mines at night. The movement on the territory of the base was reduced to a minimum: the factory looked deserted ... It was from this abandoned factory that the groups left, derailed the eastern Montoro train with ammunition, blew up the train in

tunnel in the Peñarroya-Cordoba section, and then several bridges in the same area ... The tunnel was put out of action with the help of a picked up mine, tested as far back as Kiev in 1932. A car tire filled with explosives was placed between the rails. A piece of steel cable in the form of a loop was tied to the tire. The locomotive, having jumped out at a decent speed from behind the turn, hooked the loop with its coupling device, and dragged the tire with it. Two grating igniters worked. At the same time, saboteurs from the bushes began to throw bottles of combustible mixture at the cars. The burning train disappeared into the tunnels. A few seconds later there was a muffled bang of an explosion... The ammunition train burned and exploded for several days. The path turned out to be badly damaged, and the tunnel was blocked. The rails, fused into stone, had to be cut out by the enemy with autogens and torn with dynamite. The Nazis advancing on Pozoblanco really needed this road. The sabotage was all the more unexpected for them, since after our first unsuccessful attempt to raid the tunnel, the rebels placed almost a whole battalion to guard it. Could they have imagined that their own locomotive would drag the fatal mine here?! It should be said that Colonel Perez Salas, who ordered the destruction of the tunnel, generously offered Captain Domingo a company of fighters and a ton of dynamite. But in reality, it took only nine demolition men and only fifty kilograms of explosives!

"The commander of the front knows the instructions well, but is completely unfamiliar with partisan techniques," Domingo said later. "Otherwise he wouldn't have forked out. But we will find how to dispose of a ton of dynamite.

— Have you tried talking to the colonel about the device train wrecks? I couldn't resist.

"I'll be damned if I'm going to explain once again to this blank wall, this monarchist, that it is necessary to blow up enemy trains!" With great success, I could explain this to my horse! - Well, suppose

Perez Salas is not a monarchist ... - All the same! .. How do you say it in Russian ... Companion? Yes Yes! He's a travel companion! And, mark my word, unreliable [To the credit of Colonel Salas, it must be said that he remained faithful to the republic to the end and was shot by the Nazis in 1939. — Note].

Domingo boiled up so much that I considered it useless to stop him. But the captain clearly went too far. After the explosion in the tunnel, Pérez Salas began to treat the bombers better, although he still forbade organizing train derailments where passenger traffic continued. Well, an order is an order! But one day, the miners nevertheless violated it ... Destruction of the echelon with the headquarters of the Italian air division On a moonlit night, we left the base near Adamus in three groups and headed for the railway junction of Cordova. A few kilometers from the city, far from the roads, one of these groups came across an abandoned cortijo. - a shepherd's house built of stones with a low clay fence. In the morning it rained heavily, the soldiers got wet, tired and decided to rest. The Spaniard Marquez remained at the post. Near the door, not letting go of the carbine, stretched out Juan Grande. Rubio perched on a bench under the window. The rest lay down on the floor. Sleep instantly overcame people. Only Anto-nio was awake, nursing his inseparable Mauser, and two newcomers - Italians Aldo and Emilio from the Garibaldi battalion, talking quietly about something. I dozed off too, but was soon awakened. — A shepherd is coming to the cortijo. Chasing goats and sheep,” whispered the commander of the group, Marquez, leaning towards me. Hiding outside the window, we began to follow

the owner of Cortijo. The shepherd was apparently a brave man. He noticed our footprints and yet leisurely continued on his way. Acquaintance took place quickly. We opened up to the shepherd and asked him to tell us what he knew about the fascists of Cordoba. The shepherd sat down on the threshold, as they sit down with us in Tver or Ryazan, put it in the corner

staff.

“There are a lot of them in Cordova,” he began slowly. There's more than enough. There's even an airfield set up nearby... But there aren't enough of you, sons. Believe old Manuel, there aren't enough. You can't cope with the Italians who run the airfield...

- It seems that the opportunity has turned up to "send greetings" to Mussolini, - Aldo said excitedly to his friend Emilio. Manuel, who was sitting on the threshold, looked perplexedly at the speaker:

- Italian ... Forgive me, gentlemen ... I'm old ...

"Our Italians are not of those who sit in Cordoba," Rubio hastened to reassure the shepherd. "They are Garibaldians, which means they are friends of the people and enemies of Franco!" The old man got up, straightening his back with difficulty, and extended his large, sun-dark hands to Aldo and Emilio.

"I am happy to welcome honest Italians into my home!" Thank you sons for coming! Thank you... A low whistle came from outside as Sanchez, who was on guard duty, warned of danger. A slender girl was approaching Cortijo, laughing with two soldiers. "This is my youngest daughter, Esperanza," Manuel muttered.

"Forgive the sinner, but really, it's not her fault... Guys always look after the girls... The soldiers who came in after Esperanza didn't even have time to come to their senses as they were disarmed and searched. They turned out to be simple village boys - they had recently been mobilized by the rebels. The prisoners said that they were serving in a reserve regiment in Cordoba, that from time to time they were entrusted with the protection of bridges and crossings, that they were drilled heavily, but fed badly. While Marquez was interrogating the soldiers, our soldiers managed to calm their daughter Manuela with compliments. This devil was already flirting left and right. It started to rain again. Now he whipped like a bucket. Manuel's goats and sheep huddled under a huge tree with pods growing on it. The old man looked anxiously at the herd. "Nothing will be done to your sheep. Then you will deal with them ... In the meantime, we cannot let go of either you or your daughter. You understand, it's

war," Antonio explained guiltily to the old man. The prisoners looked confusedly at each other, then at the bombers. One of the soldiers finally could not stand it and, turning to no one, asked, hoarse from

voice excitement:

- And what will happen to us? There was silence in the house. In fact, what about the prisoners? It's getting dark soon and we'll be on our way. Why not take them with you? But you can't let the guys go? Leave under guard in cortijo? It also doesn't fit. We won't come back here... After much discussion, it was decided to take the soldiers with us. "Although

you served the Nazis," Marquez turned to the soldiers, "we will give you life. Prove that this is not done in vain. We are scouts. We need to quietly go to the railroad. IN

ten in the evening will pass the passenger. Then there will be military trains. By ten we should be in place ... Marquez and Antonio tied up the cheerful prisoners. We apologized to Manuel and his daughter for the disturbance and set off. We got to the railroad just in time. The prisoners really successfully led the group to the site at the turn, where the path passed along the cliff. Now all that was left was to complete the task. Exactly observing the prohibitions of Colonel Perez Salas, we had to let the passenger train through, wait for the military train and blow it up. Initially, it was supposed to split up during the operation and lay mines at three points far from each other. But even in Cortijo, due to bad weather, this plan changed. It was decided to act together. In the distance, Cordova shone carelessly with lights, From the airfield, located near the city, the rumble of warmed-up engines was heard. One after another, the planes rose into the sky with a heavy roar. It was the Italian bombers that were going to bomb the peaceful Spanish cities... The passenger train appeared right on schedule. Buzzed, flashed windows and safely headed for Cordova. "Wait for the trains," one of the prisoners whispered. We also knew that military convoys would certainly go now. After

waiting a few minutes and making sure that there were still no guards, the bombers moved towards the road. We worked quietly: we had learned a lot from our previous sorties. And if the demon is calm, everything goes well with him. Under the outer rail of the railroad track at the turn of the track, we set two mines and laid all the explosives we had. "Done," Marquez said softly. - Went. And the rails were already humming: with every second, an enemy train was approaching. We didn't see

him. Not even the lights of the locomotive could be seen. They appeared when our fighters moved several hundred meters away from the road. And suddenly I heard a loud, contrary to the prohibitions, exclamation of Juan Grande:

— Look!!! In Juan's voice - annoyance, despair, horror. I turned around and froze. A passenger train, merrily playing with the lights of cool cars, raced towards the mined area. What to do?! The stubborn, hard face of Colonel Pérez Salas flashed before his mind's eye for a moment. It turns out that the colonel was right in forbidding



should we operate on sections with passenger traffic!? I suddenly imagined people packing their bags in front of Cordoba, looking out the windows at the approaching lights of the city. And for some reason it seemed for a moment that there were no men in the carriages. Only women... But why are they going to the city occupied by the Nazis?.. And yet, if it were possible to stop the train, I would do it without hesitation! But I was separated from the railway track by almost a kilometer. Signaling a red flashlight, Juan Grande rushed to the road. However, the driver did not notice the flashlight. Flames shot up under the wheels of the locomotive, an explosion reached us. In Cordoba, the lights went out instantly ... That night was difficult for me. I did not expect anything good from the future. I knew excuses wouldn't help. It's good if they remove it from this front. And what if they were removed at all ... Danger hung over our whole business, established with such - Rudolf! Hurry! Pele was shaking my shoulder so hard that it was hard. Even the was \*\*\* dead would wake up. Pele beamed, choking with delight, it impossible to understand him.

— Hurry! I left the dairy. Rain stopped. Captain Domingo and a fat old man with shifty eyes were sitting under the Olives. The soldiers around them smiled happily at me. Juan Pequeño touched my shoulder. Captain Domingo ruffled his hair. His eyes shone with embarrassment and happiness.

- Here, listen for yourself ... The fat old man turned out to be the mayor of one of the villages near Cordoba. Half an hour ago he was detained by our military guards. Alcalde said he wanted to cross the front line. "What compelled you to leave the rebels, Signor?" — Not far from our village, someone derailed a train. The Nazis wanted to arrest me, but thanks to the people they warned ... "Why did they come after you?" "Did I say that it's only for me?" Grab everyone! There are arrests all over the district. "And all because of the passenger train?" - Holy maiden! In this train, Italian soldiers and officers, aviation specialists moved to Cordoba. And not one survived! Rubio shook Juan Grande on the back and laughed deafeningly. Shining Domingo held out his hand to me:

“And you were afraid of Perez Salas!” Grieved! Alcade blinked his eyes in fear. He didn't understand what

was happening. ... For several days in a row, defectors, civilians, soldiers of guard units walked across the front line to the republican troops. “The

crash of the train with the Italian fascists infuriated and shocked the rebels,” they repeated. — The perpetrators of the disaster have not been found. The bandits take out their bestial malice on everyone who comes to hand. Colonel Perez Salas learned about the crash of the train with the Italian fascists on the day when we went to the location of the Republican troops. He listened to this message with indifference, without attaching importance to it. However, even Salas soon got the hang of it. Hemingway's arrival. The creation of the first sabotage battalion It began with the fact that information about the crash penetrated into the foreign press. Correspondents from progressive newspapers began to arrive at the base of the subversive guerrillas in Villanueva de Córdoba. Self-writing pens were scribbled, camera shutters snapped. Miners Mikhail Koltsov and Ilya Ehrenburg were greeted with special joy. Mikhail Koltsov had a long talk with captain Domingo, Rubio, Juan Grande, Pele and other fighters. I must say that Ernest Hemingway also visited us several times. We even took him with us behind enemy lines. However, I avoided meeting with him for obvious reasons. Among us was Alex - a Jew by nationality - an exceptional warrior. One day he stayed behind enemy lines and got lost. We thought he was captured, but Alex got out. Passed through the front line and returned to us. We respected him very much. It was to him that Hemingway, who was his friend, came. Alex was bred by Hemingway in For Whom the Bell Tolls. The attention of journalists and writers naturally flattered the subversives. They finally felt that they had ceased to be, in the eyes of those around them, a dubious appendix to the army. Besides, I was glad that we fulfilled the request of the republican infantrymen and sailors not to forget about enemy aircraft. And besides, we all understood; now, after a stream of articles and essays, miners will be remembered in Valencia and Madrid. And so it happened. First they sent us a salary for the past three months, and we paid off our debts. Then the leaders of the demolition group were summoned to the General Staff.

Republican army. After listening to the report of Captain Domingo, they decided to form a special battalion for operations behind enemy lines. The soldiers of the battalion were set one and a half army salary and aviation rations. The commissariat was instructed to release us uniforms as they wear out and gasoline as needed. We were jubilant. Finally, we can move on to the most active and extensive operations in the rear of the rebels and interventionists! Perez Salas had to tacitly admit that he was wrong. The creation of a special-purpose battalion raised the question - who are we? Previously, we were called both miners, and demolition workers, and partisans. Demolition workers and miners usually undermine or lay mines on their territory, for example, when retreating, while partisans must operate behind enemy lines. We didn't fit into any of those categories. Therefore, they began to call us saboteurs. The saboteur must not only be able to undermine and mine, but must penetrate unnoticed behind enemy lines, quietly place a mine, quietly leave, and if necessary, remain unnoticed on enemy territory for as long as necessary. Thus was born the first sabotage battalion.

## Chapter 9

In mid-February 1937, the Nazis crossed the Harama River and captured a profitable bridgehead. In March, they rushed to Guadalajara. However, thanks to the courage of the Spanish people, the Falangists and interventionists received crushing blows on all fronts. Guadalajara became synonymous in those days with the word "rout". Thousands of Italian thugs died there. The echo of the victory at Guadalajara sharply raised the morale of the fighting people. Almost every day, military trains and vehicles took off on automatic mines. On the stretch of Cordova - Peñarroya, people from the battalion of Captain Domingo skillfully blew up the railway bridge. The successes of our saboteurs in the Pozoblanco region echoed the fighting of other units and partisan detachments. On the southern front, I happened to meet an old acquaintance - M.K. Kochegarov, with whom we trained future partisans in Kyiv in 1930-1932. As it turned out, he also used our mines. Other Soviet volunteers, whom I knew before, also fought behind enemy lines. Many bold raids on military installations of rebels and interventionists were organized by other advisers, including N. A. Prokopyuk and A. K. Sprogis. It's time for moonlit nights. The moon rose higher and higher and remained longer and longer in the cloudless sky. The night luminary "helped" the enemy. The saboteurs furiously cursed her. Soon, however, we learned to work in this environment, although one of these nights let me down badly. I was dismantling in the moonlight a bag with mine-explosive equipment of a seriously wounded miner and made a careless movement. Everything went relatively well: only the electric detonator exploded. But I almost lost my right hand. Several shrapnel bit into his face. Other fighters were not injured. This accident brought me into contact with another member of the Jaen Provincial Committee of the Party, Comrade Frederico del Castillo, chief of the military medical service of the southern front.

“They say bombers only make one mistake!” Frederico remarked as he removed another shard from my bloodied hand. He was a wonderful doctor and a charming person. Just like Valenzuela, Aroca, Martinez, Frederico del Castillo dreamed of coming to the USSR after the victory over fascism. All these glorious sons of Spain, with the exception of Martinez, perished at the hands of the rebels and interventionists ... The crashes on the roads of the enemy continued. Saboteurs derailed a train with Moroccan cavalry. None of the thirty wagons survived. The rebels were furious. They put several battalions to guard the railway and continuously searched for engineering mines. Our soldiers were alert. We already had mines that exploded at the first attempt to remove them from the roadbed. The miners also changed their tactics of action: they began to frequently change the areas of attack, they switched mainly to wheel locks. Having missed the “vigilant” patrol, the saboteurs went out to the road one or two minutes before the train approached, installed a wheel lock, and the trains fell as scheduled. So, for example, a train with ammunition for the Francoists near Montoro was blown up at the end of March 1937. Our people carried out this explosion in very difficult conditions. It was not possible to approach the road from the south: open country. It is impossible to carry out a sortie in one night: far from the front line. From the north, the railway was covered not only by guards, but also by the fast river Guadalquivir; in addition to mines and weapons, two folding canvas boats had to be carried with them. On similar boats in 1930-1932 I crossed the Dnieper, but those were training sessions. Sailor Ruiz led this sortie. To the west of Montoro, the river was not guarded, and the saboteurs calmly crossed it. They managed to put two mines and even saw the train fall down a slope. In the afternoon, the rebels tried to take out ammunition from the crumpled train by cars. But they didn't succeed either. Planes under the command of K. M. Gusev suddenly flew into a cluster of enemy vehicles. Many of them burned down or exploded right next to the broken cars. This picture could be well observed from the mountains from the position of the Republicans. And Comrade Pazuelo, who arrived from Jaen, was an eyewitness to an unforgettable spectacle. By the end of March, the dexterous, bold, daring saboteurs of Captain Domingo had fundamentally violated

rail traffic on the Cordoba-Peñarroya section. Then the Francoists began to carry out transportation along the highway. But then the fighters of Domingo also came out onto the road. The movement of enemy columns along the motorway was sharply reduced. Especially at night. Several fascist infantry battalions never made it to the front; they were put on guard of road structures and the road itself. A lot of painstaking and sometimes dangerous work was carried out by a small team, where Sastre was the eldest. Translated into Russian - Sastre - tailor. But our Sastre was a good electrical engineer, and then he became a pyrotechnician. All feelings were instantly reflected on his full round face. Even with outstanding fullness, Sastre was very mobile. This seemingly "nervous" person always worked very calmly and confidently. Sastre not only studied the process of making all the mines and grenades used by the Red partisans during the war years against foreign interventionists and the White Guards and invented by us during the training of the partisans, but he himself began to improve the technique. Having mastered our "potato" and "apple" retarders, Sastre proposed his "orange" retardant (the principle of operation of "vegetable" and "fruit" retarders is based on using their property to dry out or rot, or vice versa - to swell or germinate by seeds in a humid environment. If you think a little, in addition to agricultural products, almost any objects, phenomena, living organisms can be used for home-made retarders: snow, ice, water, sand, salt, sugar, drought, thunderstorm, day, night, the onset of winter, bed bugs, etc. "I invented the original "mouse" moderator. Thus, using improvised objects, you can install a mine with any deceleration period: from several minutes to a year or more. Approx. ed. A. E.) And I must admit, this invention turned out to be more accurate. Our miners received anti-train and other time-delayed mines that could be set on dark moonless nights with the expectation that they would explode on a full moon. Sastre also participated in the creation of the first small magnetic mines, subsequently improved by the British. These mines of ours held well on the metal and exploded, depending on the length of the wick, five to thirty minutes after installation, reliably

knocking out a torn hole in the tanks. And the tested las bombas de mano (hand grenades) and fuses for them were still in the widest demand. They could be made not only on republican territory, but also on hidden bases behind enemy lines. We carried and carried with us only fuses and explosives, and the metal for grenade cases was found on the spot. Pieces of water pipes, and tin cans stuffed with wire or nails, and just wire, were suitable for this. The fuses and mines made in Jaen were used on several fronts ... Who would have thought then that in four years we would do it again, but already on Soviet soil ?! Trojan mule The special battalion is fully equipped. Now he was based in three places - Jaen, Villanueva de Cordova and Valencia, where the workshop continued to work and new groups were being trained. The battalion headquarters also began to work. It was headed by the International Brigadier, Yugoslav captain Ilic. Neat, smart, Ilic did what Domingo could not get used to: he carefully kept documentation, meticulously collected information about the actions of groups, compiled reports for the command. He also regularly dealt with supply issues. In the second half of April, I experienced great joy: Guy Lazarevich Tumanyan arrived in Khaen and with him the elusive Xanthi. Domingo also rejoiced at the arrival of Xanthi, having heard well about his daring sorties behind the rebel lines. - How tall, how well he sits on a horse! he admired. — Born cavalryman! I told Domingo that Xanthi was not just a cavalryman, but a real highlander dzhigit, and our captain

decided to show the guest the cavalry platoon of miners formed in Villanueva de Cordova. Xanthi and Tumanyan got acquainted with the miners, talked a lot with them, shared their experience. Together we toured the bases in Jaen, Villanueva de Córdoba and even visited a hidden base behind enemy lines west of Adamus. Both Tumanyan and Xanthi were satisfied with the results of their trips. At parting, they hinted to me that in the near future several groups might be transferred to other fronts ... Recalling those days, I cannot but tell about one of the combat episodes associated with the hot April 1937, about the monastery of la Virgen de la Cabeza, where they settled rebels. Several attempts by the Republicans to clean up the monastery

were not successful. Neither shelling nor even bombing did any significant damage to the garrison of the monastery: thick walls and strong vaults of cellars provided the enemy with reliable protection. The rebellious garrison in the monastery plunged into republican territory like a painful splinter. He should have been finished with. But how? So it occurred to someone to use saboteurs to capture the monastery. They were supposed to get to the monastery at night and blow up the stone wall. Domingo objected to this ridiculous undertaking:

- Firstly, our fighters will be destroyed at the slightest attempt to approach the wall. Secondly, a small group is simply not able to drag the required amount of explosives to the monastery. "So the bombers are also powerless?" Why are they powerless? Let me see. Miners still watched the monastery, thought and proposed their plan to capture the monastery. - And what do you expect?

they were asked skeptically. "Only because of the complete ignorance of the rebels in matters of classical literature," Sastre, the head of the laboratory of the mine workshop, calmly replied. And then, a week later, on the road from Andujar to the headquarters of the battalion that besieged the nest of the rebels, a rider appeared. Glancing fearfully at the monastery, he roughly urged his mule, loaded with two boxes of cartridges. Several shots from the monastery walls forced the rider to roll off the saddle and hide in a ditch. A few more shots - and the rider, leaving the mule, began to crawl away. The animal, which had lost its rider, began to nibble on the grass. But on the sides of the stone highway, it was stunted, and at the monastery one could see a solid green carpet. The mule immediately rushed to the pasture. - It was in the evening. In the morning, to our great

delight, the mule was gone. Apparently, the rebels took him to their place, - said Domingo. Waited two days. The third battalion, blockading the monastery, prepared to attack. And on the road from Jaen to Adamus, the rider appeared again. He also rode a mule and also carried two boxes. Only the mule this time we picked up a special one. About a month ago it was recaptured from the rebels. From the peasants it was known that this animal grew up in a monastery. In one of the boxes



loaded on a mule, there was explosive: twenty kilograms of dynamite, surrounded by nails and pieces of iron. This box was equipped with a lock. The other was stuffed with worthless cartridges. The rider cheerfully urged the animal, but the shots made this "loser" roll off the saddle. Left to its own devices, the mule slowly wandered towards the monastery walls. The saboteurs did not see how they let the mule into the monastery courtyard, but they realized that this had happened when the explosion thundered. The battalion immediately went on the attack and came close to the monastery, losing only a few wounded: the confused rebels did not have time to open fire in time. Two days later, a white banner flew over the monastery. Rebels

gave up...

"Honestly," said one of the Republican chiefs, "we did not really believe in the success of your venture, but she

helped us.

- You obviously don't. thought that the Andalusian mule could become a Trojan horse? Domingo grinned. "And why is he worse than Homer's stallion, damn it ?!"

## **Chapter 10. Near Madrid and Zaragoza. Anarcho-Trotsky putsch in Barcelona**

On May 2, Xanthi and I saw off Guy Lazarevich Tumanyan to his homeland. Returning to the Barcelona hotel, I felt that I was falling ill. The thermometer showed about forty. After ordering me to lie down, Xanthi locked the room and left to get medicine. As soon as he returned, shooting started in the city. These were not single shots, to which we are accustomed - they fired bursts and volleys. Machine guns fired up. Somewhere near the hotel a grenade banged, another... Xanthi turned off the light: "Did something

happen?" "Perhaps

the anarchists have come forward," he said calmly, peering into the blue of the night. - We need to call ... But it was not possible to get through anywhere. Some men answered instead of telephone operators. When they found out who was speaking, they immediately turned off the device. And the firing grew stronger. Only an hour later, the news somehow leaked to the hotel, barricaded by the administration and guests: an armed putsch of anarchists and poumov Trotskyists had begun. They demanded the resignation of the Catalan government, the immediate dissolution of the armed forces and the transfer of all power to the Anarcho-Trotskyists. They managed to capture the barracks of the mountain rifle battalion and the telegraph office, take control of the stations and all urban transport. The area where the building of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia was located was especially heavily shelled. Apparently, the bandits tried to seize this building as well. Leaving the hotel was pointless. In addition, I could barely stand on my feet. We believed that the impudent attack of the Anarcho-Trotskyist bastards would be immediately suppressed. But the government of Catalonia showed monstrous confusion. The Anarchists withdrew their battalions from the Aragonese front and ruled the city with impunity. The central government sent an aviation squadron and tanks to suppress the rebels. This news finally brought the insolent and provocateurs to their senses. On the night of May 6, anarcho-

the Trotskyist coup was liquidated. But Barcelona survived three tragic days. Hundreds of patriots died in street fighting. Among those killed were many women and children. The Barcelona putsch showed the true face of the anarchists and poumovtsy - direct assistants of fascism. The government of Dr. Negrin It is unbearably difficult to remain inactive on such days. As soon as I felt better, I, Xanthi and his interpreter ventured to escape to their own. Vicente drove, avoiding barricade-blocked streets and neighborhoods where gunfire was still going on. We were lucky. We made it out of Barcelona safely. Events happened at breakneck speed. After Largo Caballero refused to discuss the military and political situation in the country at a meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Communists withdrew from the government. Largo Caballero believed that he had waited in the wings. But the majority of influential socialist ministers declared that there could be no government without communists. After several frantic and stupid attempts to create a so-called "trade union government" Caballero was forced to resign. A new government arose - the government of Dr. Negrin. It included three socialists, two communists, two left-wing republicans, one representative each from the Catalan and Basque nationalists. In support of their anti-communist friend Largo Caballero, the anarchists refused to participate in the new government. However, they did not flaunt for long. Convinced that the government exists and actively operates without their support, "the anarchists bowed. But even after that they failed to restore their former influence. Their authority fell sharply. The Negrin government adopted a decree on agrarian reform developed by the communist minister Vicente Uribe. Protecting the peasants from the so-called "uncontrolled elements" and disbanding the collective farms forcibly created by the anarchists, it quickly gained popularity among the people. The Communist Party of Spain gained even more weight. Its willingness to fight to victory caused a new surge of enthusiasm among the masses. And although the civil war entered a period characterized by immeasurably more difficult conditions than the original (territorial superiority over the rebels was lost, there was not enough food and weapons), the Republicans more than ever

hoped to win. A series of brilliant operations proved that these hopes were not built on sand. But it was not enough to remove some generals and remove individual political bankrupts from leadership. It was necessary to eradicate to the end the spirit of betrayal that remained in some places, to overcome the passivity and routine of headquarters. This, alas, did not happen ... Brunet is ours! Trying to alleviate the situation of the northern provinces of Spain, the Republicans organized an offensive in the summer of 1937 in the Brunete region. The best units of the army operated in this direction, and above all, units of the legendary Fifth Regiment. The operation was commanded by the national heroes of Spain Lister and Modesto. It was necessary to disrupt the supply of enemy reinforcements by rail, connecting the Madrid grouping of the rebels with the southwestern provinces of Spain occupied by them. The command instructed Xanthi to disable the Talavera-Navalmoral de la Mata railway section. The strike on this important communication for the enemy was timed to coincide with the start of the offensive operation of the Republican troops near Madrid. Traffic on the highway should have been disrupted for at least five days. To this attracted a part of the saboteurs from the battalion of Captain Domingo. At the end of June we found ourselves southeast of Talavera, fifteen kilometers south of Tahoe. Tahoe is a calm river, one hundred and fifty to two hundred meters wide, with gently sloping banks. Its southern bank was occupied by the Republicans, and the Nazis settled on the northern one. It was decided on the very first night to quietly transport five or six small groups of saboteurs with engineering mines across the river, and then during the week to transfer two or three more groups a day. The preparation of people, equipment, crossing means was carefully carried out. Finally, the time has come to act. Light boats silently descend into the water, people silently land. Soon the boats are out of sight. Seconds, minutes... An illuminating flare soars up on the northern shore. We are feverishly looking around the river... No boats are visible... In the second half of the night, on the right, upstream, almost at the water, two more flares flashed. Rifle and machine-gun fire began from the northern shore. Republican units also opened fire in response. The alarm, it turns out, was caused by two local residents who were swimming away from the fascist hell. Finally, on the northern shore, the long-awaited

conditional signal. We prepared to receive the returning saboteurs, and if they were pursued, then to provide fire support. A few agonizing minutes pass. The first boat quietly moored to our shore.

- Everything is fine! - reports the returned commander of the group Erminio. And as if in confirmation of these words in the north, near the railway, a dull explosion is heard. No, it's not very good. Early! The other groups had not yet returned, but the enemy was already alarmed. Flashes of flares flicker in the distance. The rebels also began to fuss on the shore. But the river is not only an obstacle, it is also a saving landmark. The fighters know: there, on its southern shore, they are their own! Not far from the water on the other side, a hand grenade explodes. There is no doubt - a battle began there ... More and more grenades are exploding ... One of the groups returned from the other side by swimming. Wet miners got out of the water quietly and immediately moved away from the river. By the morning we summed up. No one was killed or missing, but two soldiers were wounded. And on the railway west of Talavera, fourteen anti-train mines of instant and delayed action were installed. On the very first night, an enemy echelon with troops blew up on them, then another train took off ... For five days in a row, saboteurs-miners worked on the eastern Talavera road. People have forgotten about sleep. Ate in fits and starts. Everyone's eyes were sunken and red. Even Rubio's defiant hair was disheveled and somehow faded. The jokes of Jan the Quiet stopped. But the deed was done. Traffic on the road was paralyzed. The Republicans have taken Brunete! After this victory, Domingo was directly inflamed. Taking one company with him, he decided to act on communications north and northwest of the enemy's Madrid grouping. Five days later, I joined Domingo with his other group of miners. We worked together until August. It was there, near Madrid, that I saw the Nazi pilots shot down at night by Spanish fighters. They only remotely reminded me of those that boasted in Paris. Where did their defiant cockiness go! In the eyes there is only fear, the habits of lackeys. - Nasty look! Domingo

determined. During the enemy operation, by August 1937, the battalion actually turned into a special brigade. Explosion on the bridge. The next big operation, in which the soldiers of Captain Domingo's special battalion actively participated

Zaragoza in August 1937. It also got off to a good start. By August, on the Aragonese front, Lister's units were setting the tone. The influence of the anarchists has completely come to an end. The leaders fled the country. During the offensive, the troops of the republic managed to take Belchite. This forced the rebels to withdraw units from other fronts and transfer them to the Aragonese, hitherto considered safe. Fighters Domingo again had the opportunity to show themselves. He boldly ambushed Marquez's car columns. With desperate audacity, Antonio burst onto the bridges. The American Alex derailed locomotives and entire military echelons. Deep behind enemy lines, the taciturn Juan Pequeño was active; his group destroyed an enemy echelon with manpower almost sixty kilometers from the front line. The crash was orchestrated with such composure and skill that no one emerged from the rubble alive. I was very happy for my comrades. Now they were real saboteurs: resourceful, daring, not recognizing hopeless situations, able to use the most insignificant mistake of the enemy. There are many examples to prove this. I will tell you about only one case, about how a group of Rubio and 19-year-old Nogues from Barcelona blew up in broad daylight a heavily guarded bridge over the Alberche and a line of vehicles with troops and ammunition moving along it. I choose this case not because it is brighter than the others, but only because in the difficult situation that has arisen, the Spanish fighters and comrades from the international brigade acted equally selflessly, helping each other out. In the summer of 1937, our "car enthusiasts" expanded the scope of their activities, appearing on one front or the other. Groups of Rubio, Nogues, Carrillo got the hang of capturing single cars. On these machines, they sometimes drove around enemy territory for hours. Only sensing danger or noticing a checkpoint ahead, the saboteurs destroyed their "prey" and went into the mountains. But, then, having appeared on a new highway, they captured a new car and continued their "walk". It never occurred to any of us to use captured vehicles to destroy bridges. And then ... After we damaged the railway near Talavera, the enemy's movement along the highway sharply increased. As a rule, transport moved at night, in columns. Everything is hard

bridges being restored were heavily guarded. Under these conditions, the use of thorns and single mines did not give the desired effect. And then one day, talking with the commanders of the groups before the next sortie behind enemy lines, Xanthi suggested: - Friends! You already have experience in capturing cars. Try to break into the

bridge in a captured car, remove the guard and destroy it. "Shall we try, Ippolito?" Rubio asked Nogues of Barcelona

- stocky young guy.

"Why not try," he agreed. During the night, Rubio's and Nogues' groups crossed the Tahoe safely. We went out to the highway. A suitable target never appeared. I had to hide for a day in the Sierra de San Vincente.

- What to do? - lamented Nogues, - Hundreds of cars go to Madrid, there are almost no single ones ... All day the saboteurs did not tear themselves away from their binoculars. The road near the East Talavera bridge was in front of them in full view. It is clearly seen from the mountains that columns of trucks and many cars passed the bridge without stopping. So, the way to get on the bridge is clear. But how do you blow up a bridge by speeding across it? While they were considering how best to proceed, a truck with a kitchen on a trailer appeared on the road. The driver willingly stopped to answer the question of "gentlemen of the officers." The cook was sitting next to him. - What's in the cauldron? Rubio asked. - Soup. - Pour it to hell. There will be another filling ... The prisoners were tied up, gagged and laid to rest on opposite sides of the

road. Attached to the tail of the enemy  
convoy,

the kitchen calmly approached the target, drove onto the bridge. And suddenly, in the middle of it, she unhooked from the tractor. The trailer blocked traffic, and the sentry rushed to drag him to the railing. He immediately, apparently, sensed something was wrong: the kitchen boiler smelled not of mutton, but of burning Fickford cord. Experienced soldiers are familiar with this smell, and the sentry was undoubtedly one of them. He did not lose his temper, tried to throw the trailer off the bridge. But it turned out to be impossible for one. He called for help from drivers. However, neither the drivers nor the other soldiers from the guards of the bridge had time to understand what was the matter. The flames rose high, an explosion thundered. And the ill-fated

the truck, which lost the trailer, managed to disappear without a trace in the meantime ... Yes, our demolition workers learned how to skillfully act on the enemy's communications. In the spring and summer of 1937, it was not in vain that they received one gratitude from the command after another. Disturbing news from the motherland In the twentieth of June, I returned from Jaen and went to our military adviser Kolman. We talked about this and that. I noticed that Kolman hesitated, as if he wanted to and did not dare to say about something hidden.

- What's happened? I asked bluntly. Have you not read newspapers for a long time? Where could I read

them? "Didn't you listen to the radio either? .. And you don't know anything?"

Kolman looked around, as if fearing that we were being

overheard. - On the eleventh, the trial of Tukhachevsky, Uborevich, Kork, Yakir took place ... They carried out sabotage work, tried to prepare our defeat in a future war. wanted

restore the power of the landlords and capitalists.

- What?! Kolman filed another newspaper for June 13: -

Here ... The lines jumped before my eyes: "... On June 12 of

this year, the court sentenced vile traitors and traitors to capital punishment - execution. The sentence was carried out." As if in reality, I saw Yakir's face in front of me: - You are entrusted with the most important party business, Comrade Starinov. I

hope you justify our hopes... I saw a forest near Olevsky. Airfield near Kharkov. Night exercises, where Yakir spoke with pride about Soviet military equipment. This man is a traitor and a traitor?! And Marshal Tukhachevsky is a Bonapartist?! Eideman, Uborevich, Primakov, Putna - famous heroes of the civil war - and all of them are also enemies of the people?! Kolman carefully took the newspaper from me. — How is it? was all I could say. "Great," agreed the adviser. - It's impossible to believe. But you saw... - And what was their self-interest to betray the Soviet power? Power,

which they installed? For which blood was shed?



- Hush ... Of course, some kind of savagery ... I myself do not understand what they were counting on ... What could the capitalists give them? - Nothing! They would be the first to be shot if Primakov or Yakir

fell into the clutches of the Nazis. - You see, they write about an attempt to

seize power ... - So they were the authorities! - Nevertheless, the fact is obvious ... Yes, the monstrous fact was obvious. Both Kolman and I could not but believe Stalin, not believe the court. They could not help believing, but what had happened did not fit in my mind ... Reading in the newspapers that Vyshinsky was awarded the Order of Lenin "for strengthening socialist legality", bumping into the name Yezhov and caricatures depicting hedgehogs in which enemies of the people writhe, I experienced acute attacks longing, Not for a moment was it forgotten that he worked with Yakir, that he repeatedly accompanied Primakov and Tukhachevsky. "And what will you answer when they ask if Yakir and Primakov knew? What awaits you upon returning to your homeland?" I asked myself more than once. "What will you answer?" "You look bad, Rudolf! Domingo

- Yes, friend. I'm getting tired ... What else could I answer the captain? Accident Fate spoiled the saboteurs for too long not to end up with one of those gifts that she would have been better off keeping to herself. Superstition has nothing to do with it. We had to work mainly with dynamite, and even in peaceful conditions it is capable of presenting bitter surprises. It can explode from the first spark, from the first strong blow. But now, come on, he has never been outrageous with us. Near Teruel, in Alfambra, Pele was bombed with dynamite, but managed to get the car out of the village. The dynamite did not explode, although one of the Nazi bombs fell too close. In the same place, in Alfambra, I somehow found fighters peacefully smoking on boxes of dynamite, pushed close to the fireplace. It also passed! In Jaen we kept dynamite under the beds of my translator and Rosaline. A primus stove once exploded in the next room. Streams of burning kerosene ran across the floor and into the women's bedroom. But Anna and Rosalina managed to throw their blankets over the flames. Our vehicles with dynamite were repeatedly under fire. Demomen, crossing the front line, dragged dynamite in their shoulder bags. And somehow everything worked out! But near Zaragoza not

managed. I was at the command post of an infantry battalion - I was preparing a group of Lieutenant Padillo for a sortie behind enemy lines. Other groups crossed over at several sites. Padillo was already tying up his duffel bag when we heard a dull explosion in the direction where the group transferred by our chief of staff Ilic was supposed to operate. We rushed to the site of the explosion. The paramedics were already there. A stray bullet hit a duffel bag with dynamite, fitted on the shoulders of one of the fighters. The unfortunate miner was blown to pieces. Three more were seriously wounded. Among them was Captain Ilic. Somehow bandaged Ilich did not moan. He only bit his bloodless lips and grimaced. Having loaded the wounded, Pepe carefully drove them to the division's field hospital. Ilich was operated on for more than two hours. At parting, he barely audibly whispered:

Don't despair, Rudolf. In the war, as in the war ... As for me, I will return to the battalion. You see, my eyes are intact and even one ear is left ... Some results of the Spanish business trip At the end of September 1937, it was ten months since I first set foot on Spanish soil. Where only did not have to visit during this time! Under Teruel and Granada, under Cordoba and Madrid, under Huesca and Zaragoza. I could tell myself with satisfaction that the demolition guerrillas with whom I happened to work were not wasting their time. In ten months, the mines they laid exploded under almost a hundred enemy trains with soldiers, artillery, cavalry, ammunition, fuel and lubricants, tanks. Many times more Francoist vehicles were blown up on our mines. , damaged communication lines!.. Together with the rest of the Soviet volunteers, I tried to convey to the Spanish comrades the experience of partisan operations accumulated in our country during the years of the civil war... I taught them what I myself learned in the thirties, working under the guidance of Yakir and Baar. , the successful use of engineering mines on the communications of the Francoists became possible only because we energetically undertook the development of this formidable weapon in our homeland in the early thirties.

they could not ensure the safety of their communications, although they often threw on the guard a hundred-kilometer stretch of the way to a regiment of soldiers. They did not learn how to detect some of our mines, and those that they found did not know how to neutralize. The German and Italian sappers, no doubt, tried to study our technology, but we constantly put them before new and new riddles. Either they arranged surprises, then they supplied mines with fuses that excluded the possibility of their extraction, then they used magnetic mines of a design unknown to the enemy. The enemy, as a rule, found out about the installation of our mines only when they dumped his echelons down a slope. Therefore, the Soviet military leaders, who in every possible way encouraged the search for military engineers, technicians and commanders of the engineering troops, who designed mines for partisans, knew what they were doing. But of course, the mines themselves, no matter how good they were, could not bring significant benefits if they did not fall into reliable hands. The actions of special partisan units of the republican army were successful, closely and skillfully interacting with the advancing troops. They became successful only because they were carried out by people inspired by the lofty ideas of the struggle for freedom and democracy. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain, personally Jose Diaz and Dolores Ibarruri paid much attention to the partisan struggle in the rear of Franco. Special units were regularly replenished with communists - fearless fighters against fascism. Side by side with the Spanish communists in the ranks of special units fought socialists and communists from other countries, who considered the defense of the Spanish Republic their international working duty. The enormous moral superiority of the republican fighters over the enemy soldiers was indisputable. The people tirelessly helped their army. That is why our attacks behind enemy lines, which facilitated the position of the troops, were accompanied by invariable success ... The bourgeois bosses of the West betrayed the Spanish Republic, and fascism strangled it. But the republic resisted until the last hour. In direct single combat, the enemy could never have been able to. Today, looking back, I can confidently defeat her ... to show that the modern guerrilla sabotage war was born in 1936 in Spain and from there spread to other countries.

July 1936, the now famous phrase "A cloudless sky over all Spain" heralded the beginning of a rebellion of right-wing generals against the Spanish Republic. The generals were supported by fascist Germany and Italy, in a short time they sent about two thousand combat aircraft, 1200 tanks, two thousand guns, rifles, machine guns, shells and cartridges to the rebels. Well-trained pilots, tankmen, gunners and other military experts were sent to Spain from these countries. The number of the Italian expeditionary army reached 200 thousand people, the German legion "Condor" - 50 thousand people. This intervention largely changed the course of the war. As the regular republican army retreated, partisan groups and detachments began to operate in the territory occupied by the rebels. The numerical and qualitative growth of the armies involved in the conflict on the side of Franco, combined with the actions of counterintelligence, significantly narrowed the ability of the partisans to fight the enemy in open battle. On the other hand, these armies have inevitably become more dependent on a variety of supplies, from fuel and lubricants to ammunition. For the first time in the 20th century, this opened up completely new possibilities for waging a sabotage war, and many of the sabotage techniques worked out during the Spanish Civil War were then replicated and used in various countries at different times. The Spaniards, who last guerrillaized during the Napoleonic Wars, had neither the skills nor the specialists of saboteurs capable of solving the specific tasks of guerrilla warfare in the rear of the modern regular army. Seeing this, senior military adviser Yakov Berzin secured the dispatch to Spain of well-trained, experienced commanders and specialists - graduates of special schools in the USSR. They began their activities as advisers and instructors of small reconnaissance groups, which then turned into sabotage groups. In the USSR in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a lot of work was done to prepare for a guerrilla war in the event of a possible enemy attack. Hundreds of former civil war partisans were trained or retrained, new special sabotage means were developed - with an emphasis on what the partisans themselves could do behind enemy lines from improvised materials. Many leaders of the Comintern also went through sabotage schools, who then went to lead the "labor movement" in Europe and

America. I happened to be an adviser in one of these formations, commanded by Captain Domingo Ungria. In ten months, this sabotage group, numbering 12 fighters, turned into the XIV partisan corps, in which about 3 thousand people fought. We carried out about 200 sabotage and ambushes, and the estimated losses of the enemy amounted to more than two thousand people. The irretrievable losses of the XIV Corps during the entire period of hostilities amounted to only 14 people - moreover, one was killed in Valencia by anarchists, one was accidentally shot by his own when returning from the rear of the enemy, one died while placing a mine, one died while crossing the front line (a stray bullet hit a backpack with dynamite), and 10 laid down their heads in battle. At the beginning of November 1937, I handed over my duties to the hero of the Civil War Christopher Salnin and left for my homeland. After the defeat of the Republicans, part of the personnel of the XIV Corps, having seized the ship, moved to Algeria, from there to the Soviet Union. Some of the fighters crossed the Spanish-French border and were interned. When the French authorities decided to extradite them to the Falangists, the fighters in full force escaped from the concentration camp and went to the mountains. On the basis of their partisan detachments, 27 brigades were created, consolidated into 9 partisan divisions. They hanged the Duce and liberated Marseille and Paris from the Nazis. Four fighters of the XIV Corps subsequently, together with Fidel Castro, landed on Playa Giron ...

## **PART III. IF TOMORROW WAR...**

## Chapter 1

The cargo ship passed Kronstadt. Ahead, in a foggy haze of an unusually fine autumn day, the familiar contours of the Admiralty and the Peter and Paul Fortress were already looming. Together with several comrades, I was returning from Spain. Happy and excited, we looked at the dark green water of our native Gulf of Finland, at the golden needle of the familiar spire. Dear Motherland, we are back! Behind was a difficult year in distant and painfully close Spain. There we buried many compatriots. They found true friends there. There, the earth absorbed drops of our blood. And everything that is done by us is done in the name of the bright Motherland. Didn't she send us to the Spanish brethren? Wasn't our love for Spain her love?.. Leningrad! How beautiful you appeared before me on a fine autumn day in 1937! I have seen Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, Antwerp, Brussels. No doubt, and they were beautiful in their own way. I even changed my initial opinion of Paris when I saw it on the way back from Spain in the early morning, when the working people hurried to work, and noisy gamens, darting through the crowd, thrust Hume into the hands of passers-by. But you, Leningrad, are more beautiful than all the capitals! I walked along the streets, with difficulty resisting the temptation to press my cheek against the rough lime of any wall, and, unable to resist, touched the hand of the bridge railing, then the wet bark of a tree, then the cold cast iron of street lamps.

— For how long? the hotel attendant asked me. -

For a day. I didn't say that these days would hang on my conscience, that I would have to give an explanation for them. But I could not leave Leningrad, barely setting foot on its land. Repressions In Leningrad, I learned the terrible news The chief of staff of advisers - Colonel Ivan - as we knew him, upon arriving in Leningrad, rushed to mine and died. As I later learned, the reason was Stalin's entry at a meeting of the commanding staff in July. It all started with phone calls. It may seem strange, but the numbers of many home and office telephones of acquaintances and colleagues are perfectly preserved in my memory. Therefore, remaining

alone, I literally hung on the phone. But what a shame! Everywhere I called I was answered by complete strangers. Couldn't I have mixed up all the numbers? And nothing like this had ever happened before ... Uncertainly dialed the number of the department of the military commandant of the Leningrad-Moskovsky station.

"The commandant's assistant on duty, Chernyugov, is listening... At last, at least one familiar voice!" He, however, became somehow different. When he was Pisarev, Chernyugov answered loudly, cheerfully, and becoming an assistant to the commandant, he seemed to be shy. But it's not up to that now...

Hello, Comrade Cherniugov! Svrinov says! A tube is silent for a while. Then Cherniugov asks uncertainly: "Which one is Starinov?" Comrade military engineer of the third rank? - Well, yes, he is the best! Did not recognize? The tube is silent. "Do you hear me, Comrade Cherniugov?" - Yes, I hear ... Where are you from, comrade military engineer? - Now - from the hotel, - I laugh, recognizing the characteristic notes in Cherniugov's voice and amusing himself with his bewilderment. Maybe the clerk thought I was dead? And I hasten to reassure him: - I'm all right! Alive and well! How are you there? - Everything is fine, comrade military engineer ... - Listen, comrade Chernyugov, that's why I'm calling ... I want to know where Boris Ivanovich Filippov is now. Answer No.

— Do you hear me? Yes, Cherniugov hears. - He is now ... at a resort ... - In Chernyugov's voice, either disdain, or condescension. I hear another phone ringing on the attendant's desk.

— Excuse me, they call me... Holding the silenced receiver in my hand, I lower it heavily onto the lever. Of course, Boris Ivanovich chose the wrong time for resort trips. Sane people do not go south at the end of October. But all the same, Cherniugov's tone is too disrespectful. Or was the poor fellow's head spinning from the promotion? I shrug my shoulders and call again. This time to the Office of the Military Transport Service of the October Railway, to his fellow soldier Kolya Vasiliev. This one breaks everything! And for the first time I hear in response a short terrible word: "They took it." Have taken? Arrested Boris Ivanovich? Dearest Boris Ivanovich Filippov, always



trembling before the authorities? Soulful, simple Boris Ivanovich? Unfathomable! So, his friendliness, solicitude, simplicity - all this was a terrible disguise? .. I suddenly became disgusted with myself. Yes, what is happening? Or am I messing with something? How dare I doubt Filippov?! And the merciless voice of conscience immediately asked: "But did you doubt Yakir, whom you also knew? Filippov was arrested by the same authorities. Why don't you believe now? , having heard for the first time about the arrest of Yakir! " Finally at a loss, he decided to call another friend - N. S. Frumkin. He met me at the pier and for some reason seemed very sad. Frumkin replied that he would come to see me himself, but avoided a telephone conversation. I didn't go to the machine anymore. Now I guessed why strangers answered the familiar phones. So, dark rumors about mass arrests in my homeland turned out to be true. Rumors reaching even Spain! I left the hotel and wandered around the city for a long time, trying to comprehend what was happening. The relentless thought drilled into my brain: "Tomorrow we have to go to Moscow. What news awaits there?" I returned to my room late at night: I did not want to be alone with a black telephone. The ground again slipped from under my feet... The next day, while waiting for the train, I still could not stand it and looked into the commandant's office of the Moscow

... railway station. Chernyugov locked the door behind me and whispered that in the summer the head of the military communications of the Red Army, Appogo, and the head of the military communications of the Leningrad district, brigade commander Kartaev, had been arrested. - Public Enemies! said

Chernyugov, frightened. - And Filippov was an accomplice of Kartaev. I saw that Chernyugov was eager to give some more details, but I felt that I had had enough ... On the train, I could not fall asleep until Kalinin himself. Sleepy, physically and morally broken, I reported to the Moscow authorities about my return. They put me in a hotel, they said they would call me. I took Pyramidone and fell asleep. Woke up in the evening. There was an oppressive silence in the hotel corridors. And suddenly it dawned on me: I must immediately go to my former boss in Kyiv, a close friend Ivan Grigoryevich Zakharov. Here's who to share your anxiety with, here's who

resolve doubts! But in the house of a friend found grief. His wife met me in tears and mourning. She told a terrible story. The last weeks Ivan Georgievich lived in endless anxiety, expecting the worst. They arrested two of his direct superiors, with whom he and his wife were friendly families. Zakharov was afraid of every rustle, became withdrawn and irritable. One morning there was a hasty and insistent knock on the door. Ivan Georgievich got up, but immediately, groaning, lost consciousness. He died of a broken heart. And as it turned out, only the duty officer came with an urgent service telephone message ... I don't remember how many hours I wandered aimlessly around the city. I woke up when I saw that I was standing in front of the house of another old comrade, with whom we had served in the same regiment for eight years. With difficulty I climbed to the fifth floor of the old house, fearing that here I would find tears, passionately wishing that my friend was alive and well. - Called. Quiet steps were heard in the

apartment. They froze at the door./A minute later a muffled voice called out: "Who's there?" — Yours! I shouted joyfully.

- Who are

yours? - Yes, it's me, Starinov! —  
Starinov?

You! Wait, Ilya, I'll open  
it now. clang

locks. One. Another. Third. The door finally opened.

"Come in," said the comrade, cautiously looking behind me. Closing the door, he breathed a sigh of relief, held out his hand, smiled. But his face immediately fell apart.

— You?.. Where

are you from? — From a

special business trip. - And why in

everything abroad? Yes, I have been abroad. Haven't had

time to change yet. - That's it! .. Abroad?! We hung around in the

front. I was not asked

to undress. - Am I not on time? My friend looked closely  
the tips of your slippers.

— Excuse me, Ilya... But you know, the time is like this... By the way, our brother-soldiers were recently arrested. They took Yuvko, Lermontov. And they were not in the opposition ... Always the general line of the party

recognized ... He lowered his head so that he almost rested his chin on his chest. "Sure,"

I said. "We weren't in the opposition, we didn't go anywhere... Sorry! They didn't hold me back. The door closed without a knock. Going down the stairs, I felt like I was suffocating. Went out to the sidewalk. — Ilya! Wait!

Fastening his overcoat on the go, the comrade caught up me. He had a guilty, unhappy face.

— Ilya! He convulsively grabbed my hand. - Do not be angry! Understand! .. If you came from the Far East ... Otherwise, God knows where from ... After all, I work with secret documents ... It is written in all my questionnaires that none of my relatives has been abroad and does not live! .. Understand!.. .

- Go home. They may notice that we are talking .. - You understand?

- Go! .. By nightfall it got very cold. The streets were quickly empty. Only in the center, near the cinema and restaurants, the usual crowd still continued. Lyubov Orlova smiled merrily from the advertisement, putting her hand to the captain's cap: the Volga-Volga was on at the Metropol. Ivan Georgievich Zakharov died. My best friend did not let me in... Clouds are gathering over me Three days later I was received by Marshal of the Soviet Union K. E. Voroshilov. I came to the reception together with Senior Major of State Security S. G. Gendin. After listening to the story of his affairs in Spain, Voroshilov thanked me.

"You are worthy of a high award," the marshal said. - I think, Comrade Divisional Commander (as he called Gendin), that Starinov deserved a promotion. It is necessary to give him an appropriate big job in his specialty. Leaving the table, Voroshilov shook my hand firmly:

- Wait for the appointment, Comrade Starinov! ... The reception at the People's Commissar of Defense at first reassured and encouraged me. After all, there are no sins for me, no one ascribes them to me, they even thank me for my service! However, it turned out that, calming myself in this way, I kind of renounced my old comrades, betrayed the memory of the dead, who, perhaps, did not commit the monstrous atrocities attributed to them. And the sadness came again. The turmoil grew again. As time went. No one called me and

no "big job" offered. But every new day brought bad news for me. Gendin was soon arrested. I visited the family of Konstantin Shinkarenko, the former regiment commander of the legendary Kotovsky brigade. Shinkarenko, one of my friends from the partisan school in Kyiv, was among the first in the republic to be awarded the Order of the Red Banner of War and awarded the Honorary Arms. It turned out that they took Shinkarenko. I learned from his wife that many of Kostya's friends had been arrested - partisan commanders known to me, with whom we together laid hidden bases in case of war.

Kostya is an honest person. He was not associated with any enemies of the people. I wrote to Comrade Stalin. I'll get an appointment with Comrade Voroshilov," Shinkarenko's wife repeated, sobbing. She didn't achieve anything. Konstantin Shinkarenko was released and fully rehabilitated only after Stalin's death. He left the camps in a serious condition. I only had enough strength to get to my native Moldova. Here he suddenly died ... Meanwhile, clouds were gathering over me too. I finally got the call. But not to the People's Commissar of Defense. I was summoned to the NKVD. In the NKVD, Light, as it should be, hits me in the eyes, and the investigator's face remains in the shadows.

"Don't worry," I hear. We have called you as a witness. All that is required of you is to testify sincerely. This is in the interests of the state and in your own. But what should I show? - Don't you guess? - No, - Good. We will help you... I don't

remember the exact sequence of the interrogation, "We" kept asking where I served, how close I was with this or that person, whether I often met with M.P. Zheleznyakov, A.I. Baar. I answered without hesitation. Yes, I knew the named people. Yes, he did the job. How else? These were orders from direct superiors.

- So. And why did you set up secret partisan bases thirty to one hundred kilometers from the border? Why were saboteurs trained far from the border - the so-called partisan detachments? I understood where the investigator was driving. Answer I confusedly, evasively, and immediately from the "witness" I will turn into the Accused. He wants me to admit the criminality of the events that took place in the thirties,

to defame former bosses. From the stories of the wives of the arrested comrades, I already knew that the partisans trained by us are accused of two things: "of disbelief in the power of the socialist state" and "of preparing for hostile activities in the rear of the Soviet armies." The investigator looked at me almost affectionately. Pike, probably, also does not feel much anger towards crucian carp, which he considers doomed ...

- The bases were indeed laid a hundred kilometers from the border. But after all, fortified areas were also built a hundred or more kilometers away, and they cost hundreds of millions or billions of rubles! -

Leave the fortified areas! They are nothing. -

How about nothing? If such funds are spent on construction, then the enemy is allowed to reach these lines. And if so, it is logical to prepare everything necessary for the deployment of a partisan struggle between the border and fortified areas ... I prepared partisans to fight the enemy. The events in question were carried out in the interests of protecting the Motherland. I briefly talk about the interrogation, which lasted three hours. And it is disgusting to remember him, and the details are not so important. The investigator apparently did not have a warrant for my arrest. Pushing aside the papers and signing a pass for me, he said: "We are parting ways for today. Given

your military merit, we will not touch you. But... maybe we'll meet again. And you think. I advise you to write everything you know about the participants in the cases of Yakir, Baar, Zheleznyakov and other companies. Don't hide anything. By doing this, you will simplify your situation ... I was seized by such fear as I did not experience either at the front or behind enemy lines. In the war, I risked myself, and here all my close people, everything sacred, were put under attack. I saw only one way out - to turn to the People's Commissar of Defense, to tell about my doubts, to ask for protection from unfounded accusations. Voroshilov received me. But this time, he was stern and reserved. - What's

the matter? What did you want to report? Agitated, confused, he told the marshal about his experiences. —

Comrade People's Commissar, after all, I carried out the task of the Central Committee for the preparation for the partisan struggle, and the weapons depots were prepared at your direction. The People's Commissar of Defense was embarrassed, - Don't worry ... Then, after a pause, he to

phone: Hello, Nikolai Ivanovich ... Yes, here ... A certain Starinov, who recently arrived from Spain, is sitting with me. He was interrogated about the fulfillment of the tasks of Yakir and Berzin in preparing gangs and laying weapons for them ... Pause. An unnaturally thin voice is heard in the receiver. Voroshilov says again:

- Of course, he carried out the tasks of the enemies of the people. But he was a small man, he might not know the essence of the matter. Another pause. And again

the marshal answers: - But he distinguished himself in Spain and to a large extent atoned for his guilt. Leave him alone. We'll take appropriate measures ourselves... Head of the training ground Literally on the third day after visiting K. E. Voroshilov, I was summoned by the head of military communications of the Red Army, brigade commander A. E. Kryukov. The upcoming meeting was exciting. With Alexander Evdokimovich Kryukov, we were connected by a long-term joint service in the 4th Korostensky Red Banner Railway Regiment. How will he meet me? Will they be happy about my return to the railway troops after such a long break? Hardly! Worried, I assumed a lot. But what happened, he could not foresee. The brigade commander received me in the presence of Commissar Comrade Barinov. - Very good! said Kryukov, smiling broadly. The prodigal son has returned.

Well? We will decide on your appointment. After a pause and a meaningful look at the commissar, Kryukov said without a shadow of a smile:

- We consulted with Comrade Barinov and decided to offer you the post of chief of military communications of the district. For a moment I was speechless and only moved my lips. Finally the speech returned to me:

"Allow me, comrade brigade commander." Which one of me is the head of military communications of the district?! I am the commander of the railway troops, a demolition worker, I trained partisans, and after the academy I got into the military communications authorities against my will ... The work you offer is beyond

my power. "This is not an answer, comrade military engineer of the third rank!" Barinov

intervened. "Here's Comrade Brigade Commander (he tilted his head towards Kryukov), he commanded a railway regiment only six months ago, and now

- Head of military communications of the entire Red Army. And nothing, cope! There are not enough personnel, and we are obliged to nominate young commanders for leadership work. Barinov uttered the last phrase solemnly, as if reproaching me for cowardice. I was in the stupidest position. On the one hand, the post of chief of military communications of the district is an incredible, dizzying promotion. On the other hand, it was absolutely clear to me that I could not cope with such work, it did not meet my interests or inclinations. And what could be worse for both subordinates and for the commander himself, when he is not in place?! – What were you thinking about? the brigade commander asked anxiously. - You will have two railway regiments under your command. By

leading the military message service on two roads, you will be able to live in a big city. - If it is impossible otherwise, please - appoint me better

commander of one of the railway regiments! I pleaded.

- Stop being modest ... Ilya Grigorievich! Kryukov shook his head. - Many of your classmates are already chiefs of roads, chiefs of military communications of districts, and you are a "regiment"! Our regiments are commanded by graduates of schools not in the twenty-second, but in the thirtieth year. They were platoon commanders at the time when we were companies commanded.

- Yes, I'm not fit for such a role! - And that you started "I'm not good, I'm not good" ... Good. If you are so stubborn, we will not talk about the district. But the regiment will not pass! The least we can offer you is the position of head of the Central Scientific Testing Ground. Arranges? But keep in mind - the training ground is far from big cities, in the forests ... Of the two evils, you should choose the lesser. Thinking I agreed

become a ranger.

"So we'll write it down," Kryukov was delighted. Barinov and I got up and walked towards the door.

"Yes, wait a minute, Comrade Starinov! called Kryukov. — Hold up. We were left alone.

"Come to my house in the evening," Alexander Evdokimovich suggested in the old fashioned way to "you". "I haven't seen you in years." And my wife will be delighted, and my sons... Haven't you got married yet?

- But how can I tell you ... almost ... Kryukov's eyes widened:

- This is an event! Who is she that tamed you? -

Let me introduce you, Alexander Evdokimovich. Kryukov waved his hand: - Sign "you." At the last moment you will run away from the bride, like Podkolyosin. Okay ... Come, we are waiting! After drinking a few glasses, Kryukov said bluntly:

- What do you think? Is it easy for me in the role of the chief of military communications of the Red Army? Hey Ilya! You know, I am a soldier and have no experience in military communications. There are solid pitfalls all around - just look, you will break. And then one or the other turns out to be an enemy of the people, the cadres are thinning out. Here I am spinning like a squirrel in a wheel. Perhaps you did well that you chose the polygon. We are sending a group of academy graduates there: bridgemen, machine operators. It will be possible

to turn around. - But the landfill is a whole city in the forest with its own large farm. I'm afraid this farm will seize me! I confessed. Kryukov said all this gloomily. Obvious anxiety, bitterness, bewilderment and, as it seemed to me, anxiety sounded in his voice, were read in his eyes. It was not so much the words as the tone in which they were said that pushed me to frankness. That evening, tormenting doubts fell upon me with unprecedented force. I pushed my

glass away. - Alexander Evdokimovich! How did it happen that for twenty years people served the Soviet government and suddenly sold out? And what people! Those to whom the state has given everything, absolutely everything! And here they are - the enemies of the people. And who are they? Bourgeois? AN no. The first Red Guards, Kraskoms. What were they hoping for when they sold? Well, why? .. Why should we cheat with you? We knew many of them from the

front, from work... Alexander Evdokimovich sighed heavily: - Be quiet, Ilya! Comrade Stalin himself takes care of the cadres, he took upon himself this concern, and he will not let the innocent be offended. It is no coincidence that he nominated Yezhov as the head of the NKVD ... Isn't it so? Why are you silent like a stone? Let's have a drink! - Alexander Yevdokimovich suggested still sadly and added: - After all, you and I don't bury anyone ... Kryukov leaned over the table, and I noticed tears on his face. H



- At one time you saved my son ... I will entrust one family secret to you. At the end of last year, my brother Lieutenant Colonel Andrei Kryukov was fired from the Red Army. I'm sure it's a mistake. He is an honest man. I am convinced that they will figure it out and restore it ... And what do I feel now? .. I was amazed at the frankness of Alexander Evdokimovich and could not immediately answer. Kryukov was the first to

come to his senses. "Let's drink, Ilya, to Comrade Stalin's health." He won't hurt the innocent! I receive the rank of colonel ... On February 17, 1938, I was promoted to the rank of colonel, and on March 20 of the same year, that is, three months after returning from Spain, I was appointed head of the Central Scientific Testing Railway Range of the Red Army. The first person to whom I informed about the changes in fate was my faithful friend Anna Obrucheva. I didn't get to the range right away. Before leaving for a new duty station, I had to visit Kislovodsk for treatment. Before leaving (I was still living in a hotel) I decided to bring things to an old acquaintance, Yevsey Karpovich Afonko, with whom back in 1926-1930 we were preparing the frontier sections of Ukraine for the barrier. Beginning in 1932, Yevsey Karpovich worked at the Metrostroy. He was still the same vigorous strong man that I knew him in the army.

- Leave, leave your junk! Afonko agreed. - Come and pick it up. Only, fool! I won't keep it as a gift. With you a bottle of dry Caucasian wine. Returning from the resort, the first thing I rushed to was Yevsey Karpovich. Dropping her hands along her emaciated body, Afonko's wife stood silently in the open door.

— Really? - I just spoke. I met Yevsey Karpovich only twenty years later. - Experienced, Ilya, so much

that it is better not to remember ... But I remember; You can't forget this! Yevsey Karpovich endured a lot in prison. The first scoundrel-investigator, who put his hand on him, Afonko hit back like a partisan, knocking him down with one blow. For this he received twenty days of a solitary punishment cell. But he also endured the ice cell and subsequent interrogations. Sitting in the Lefortovo prison, where the investigative unit of the NKVD officially allowed the torture of those arrested, Yevsey Karpovich every ten days (which

was also allowed) wrote: "Dear Iosif Vissarionovich, the arrested torture-dates, they can't stand it, they slander themselves, then they are required to name accomplices and those who can't stand slander their acquaintances. The latter are arrested and also can't stand it and "confirm everything. Who needs this? .. "And he was not punished for such letters! No torture and humiliation pulled out false confessions from Afonko. And although even the semblance of a crime was completely absent, he was thrown without trial" for eight years in camps "for unknown state".

"And then, brother, I stopped writing to the "great leader," Yevsey Karpovich admitted bitterly. - I stopped because I was convinced: Stalin knows everything ...

## Chapter 2. 1938 "Public Enemies".

At the end of April 1938, I arrived at a new duty station and was immediately reminded: the former head of the training ground, Colonel Chumak, was arrested as an enemy of the people. True, what is his crime, No one knew.

- Did you make a big restructuring after Chumak? — Hm...

His house with a veranda was handed over to a kindergarten... I began to get acquainted with the work of the training ground, with the subject of testing the equipment of the railway troops, with the program of exercises. No, the matter was not limited to a house with a veranda! I discovered with alarm that work on a number of samples of new technology had been stopped. The inventors and authors of these designs are also declared enemies of the people. Their names have been deleted from the program of work. The samples of new technology proposed by them are often crossed out ... There is no logic. But, as they say, where will you go and who will you tell? Apparently, the same thing happened at the training ground as everywhere else. Remembering that time, I ask myself: is this why in the pre-war years many wonderful models of military equipment were brought at a snail's pace? Is it because at the beginning of the war with Nazi Germany, the Red Army did not have many excellent types of weapons, almost ready for mass production? And I answer myself: yes, that's why! True, not all valuable specialists were sent to dig for gold in the Kolyma or dig swamps in Siberia. Others were allowed to work in prison. These "lucky ones" brought projects to perfection in solitary cells, cut off from the world. A threat hung over them that any mistake would be recognized as sabotage, any failure would cause a deterioration in the prison regime. It was difficult to get the necessary scientific information, to find out the latest achievements of science and technology... Needless to say, the atmosphere is far from being creative! The repressed specialists were delivered to the training grounds and "test sites" under heavy guard. Only the head of the training ground, the commissioner and the representative of the special department were informed about their arrival. I remember that in the spring or summer of 1939, some kind of aviation

constructor. Nobody knew his last name. The car with the arrested man was brought to the branch behind the landfill. By this time, in a small forest clearing, security officers had already set up tents, surrounding them with a double high barbed wire fence. Only in 1943, when I met V.M. Petlyakov, the designer of the wonderful dive bomber, did I find out that he was my "guest" at the training ground... But even in those difficult conditions, the training ground team worked smoothly and amicably. A great merit in this belonged to Commissar Alexander Vasilievich Denisov, a man who knew how to delve deeply into the matter and rally people. However, our friendly team was also sometimes in a fever. Shortly after my arrival, my deputy for logistics, Dmitry Ivanovich Vorobyov, was accused of having links with the Trotskyists. The only reason for this was Vorobyov's friendship with the chief engineer for the construction of the Saratov railway bridge, Colonel N. M. Ipatov, who had recently been declared an enemy of the people. At a party meeting, engineer P. I. Martsinkevich and Vorobyov's assistant, holder of the Order of the Red Banner of War, V. N. Nikitin tried to defend Dmitry Ivanovich. But there were detractors as well. Vorobyov was expelled from the party. Soon, Beria replaced Yezhov as People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. Repressions began in the organs of the NKVD themselves. There was no time for Vorobyov. Nine months later, Dmitry Ivanovich was given back his party card ... A threat also loomed over Alexander Evdokimovich Kryukov. From the personnel department of the General Staff, I received a request to give a detailed party description of the member of the CPSU (b) A.E. Kryukov, be sure to indicate his behavior during the discussions. I wrote the most positive review. Alexander Evdokimovich survived, although in September 1939 he was relieved of his post. At that time, various commissions and individual workers from the head of the Military Communications Department of the Red Army came to the training ground at that time. All of these were newcomers who got into the central apparatus in 1937-1938. As a rule, they did not have not only Experience, but often the necessary knowledge. - To the credit of many visitors, I must say: they understood that they could not help us in any way and did not interfere in anything. However, there were others. These "inspectors" considered it their direct duty to

something to show off. According to the level of education, they could only interfere in administrative matters and therefore filled out their acts and memos with information about when and which of the landfill workers were late for work (they often did not notice the fact that we often worked until late at night!), What objects are poorly guarded, etc. However, these nominees cannot be condemned. They themselves did not ask to be in the central apparatus, many sincerely experienced the ambiguity of the situation, studied hard and already during the war years were quite familiar with the work. Our common misfortune was that the most experienced cadres left the stage almost immediately, the continuity in their shift was broken. We comprehended the full depth of this unjustifiable calamity only after the 20th Party Congress. But the people sensed evil even during the years of repression. I remember such a case. He served as a firefighter at the range. He was bold, but unsophisticated to the limit. This knight of fire loved to pass an extra glass... And then one day, while philosophizing in a circle of drinking buddies, he asked our fireman a thoughtful question: - And what, brothers? Now we have moved Yezhov to the deputies. What if he turns out to be the same enemy as Yagoda? He did not immediately understand why he was suddenly left alone. When he realized, he broke out in a cold sweat. The incident was reported to the landfill commissioner.

Denisov took a big risk by ordering the immediate dismissal of the fireman. The poor fellow was saved by this from imminent arrest. But he turned out to be right! Even before leaving for the training ground, I had heard a lot about the forests there, about the countless fish lakes. All stories turned out to be true. I liked the edge. But the most pleasant surprise for me and a special attraction of the landfill turned out to be the local railway ring. This ring, only about eighteen kilometers long, was divided into three stages, \* \* \* where we could "destroy" and "restore" roads and bridges, arrange "crash". The duties of the landfill superintendent are very extensive. But still, I was able to devote a lot of time and effort here to the issues of mining communications, the development of designs for new mines. I understood well that the troops and partisans needed engineering mines that were reliable in operation, convenient and safe to transport and install, non-removable for the enemy, suitable for long-term storage in difficult conditions. At the same time, if possible

cheap to produce! The team of scientific workers of the polygon also participated in the writing of the new Manual and Regulations on the arrangement and overcoming of obstacles on the railways. These documents already took into account the experience of using mines in Spain and took into account the results of exercises at the training ground. The work was painstaking and laborious. Comrades at the training ground joked that they had to take Leo Tolstoy as an example, who rewrote his manuscripts many times. But be that as it may, the Regulations turned out to have been issued back in March 1941, and the Instruction was already at the beginning of the war with Nazi Germany. In addition, in a year and a half I managed to write a dissertation on the topic "Mining of railways." It proved that sections of the railways left to the enemy could be put out of action for up to six months and quickly restored after the territory was reoccupied by our troops. At the training ground lost in the forests, we worked hard and much not out of a simple "love of art". Radio and newspapers brought more and more disturbing news to our wilderness. In July 1938, Japanese samurai attempted to invade our territory in the area of Lake Hasan. Just a month later, the shameful Munich agreement actually untied Hitler's hands for action in the east, and Germany immediately occupied the border regions of Czechoslovakia. On March 5, 1939, the counter-revolutionary conspirators seized power in Madrid, which was fighting with the last of its strength, and on March 28 surrendered Madrid to the Francoists and interventionists. The Spanish Republic was strangled. Everything fell apart that day. I remembered the Spanish comrades. He remembered the last trip with Vicente to the French border. After talking with a French gendarme, handing him money and a pack of cigarettes, my chauffeur drove me to the small town of Perpignan. From here I had to go to Paris by train. The last minutes of parting with a fighting friend were heavy.

"Nothing, Rudolph," said Vicente, squeezing my hand. - If we are not betrayed, we will win ... And so they were betrayed. And the putsch in Madrid was followed by Italy's attack on Albania, Japan's brazen invasion of the territory of the Mongolian People's Republic near Khalkin Gol. Europe and Asia were engulfed by the fire of war. We lived in constant expectation of some decisive events. Thus began a hot, stuffy, without a single rain, August. The pine forests around the landfill oozed

resin. The brooks and marsh Hollows have dried up. At night, distant thunder rumbled, but in the morning the sky, faded from the heat, remained as whitish as the day before. Forest fires have started. On September 1, Germany treacherously attacked Poland. An extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a law on universal military duty. And on September 17, the Red Army came out to protect the lives and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. This decisive step made us happy. It seemed that we were convincingly demonstrating to Germany that we did not intend to put up with her aggressive actions.

## Chapter 3. On the Karelian Isthmus

In the second half of the thirties, not only was unemployment completely eliminated, but there were not enough workers. There was universal free secondary education, students received a tolerable scholarship. The minimum wage in industry was even slightly higher than the subsistence level. On collective farms, wages were much lower, but the collective farmer was no longer starving. The situation with pensions and housing construction was bad. Having one room for two in a communal apartment was considered a luxury. So, in 1933-1925 I lived in a communal apartment in Moscow, where three families lived in three rooms. Of these, one is a colonel who had a son of school age. Inattention to the cause of improving housing, low wages, which in 1939 were in fact equal to the salary of 1929, is explained by the fact that huge funds were invested in the construction of new industrial enterprises and partly by excesses in the service privileges of the elite nomenklatura. It is characteristic that in the 1930s the USSR exported grain and oil, when the needs of the population for these products began to be fully satisfied only from 1935. In those years, Soviet people were taught not to choose in elections to Soviet and other bodies, but to vote for those appointed from above. As a result of the repressions, the CPSU (b) by 1939 was no longer a party of like-minded people, but a paramilitary management organization. There were fewer and fewer members of the Party who believed in communism and fought for its implementation, more and more there were members in the party who talked about communism in words and in the press, but in fact did not believe in it. At the same time, some joined the party in order to realize their opportunities in life, others in order to seize the privileges that the party leaders had. In 1931, about one-fourth of the membership of the party dropped out or was expelled from the party, as "adhering to it." This was done at a time when members of the party leadership not only did not have any material privileges, but, on the contrary, there was a party maximum and they received less than they received in the same position.



the leader is a non-partisan specialist. The party maximum was abolished at the end of the 20s, and the privileges of party leaders were increased at a high rate in the 30s. Special canteens and shops closed to ordinary customers, personal cars, mansions, state dachas, increased comfort during treatment and rest, and, finally, even a package with money, tax-free and hidden from outsiders in an amount equal to 5 or even 30 minimum wages. Despite the fact that there were believers and non-believers in communism in the party, leading comrades with different degrees of privileges, the CPSU (b) in its decisions and actions was a well-coordinated and implicitly carried out party decisions and glorified the great leader Comrade Stalin, whose personality cult is all increased. Let us note that it is precisely from those who saw the Stalinist excesses during collectivization, who saw that many of the leading partocrats, who had the opportunity in practice to show the correctness of Karl Marx's position that under communism it will be "from each according to his ability - to each according to his needs", on practice proved that such communism can not be. Maybe only the Leninist installation "communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country." During Stalin's lifetime, having lost faith in Marx's communism, no one could even hint at it. It was tantamount to suicide. "Soup" from an anti-tank mine The Finns did not spare mines. Some of their mine devices turned out to be pretty clever. We immediately encountered surprise mines of various types, with anti-personnel mines, with a metal anti-tank mine unknown to us, which, however, sometimes exploded from the weight of a person. How to neutralize it right there, on the spot? There is probably a powder or pressed tol in and around the mine fuse. Melted tol is not terrible. But pressed ... So, it is necessary to melt the pressed tol in order to begin studying samples of mines unknown to us. We find a kitchen cauldron and put the found mines into it. We hang our "pan" in a larger cauldron, found in the bathhouse of the Finnish border guards. Fill both boilers with water. We drown the bathhouse, while in both large and small

boilers do not boil water.

"Now, perhaps, it is possible," I say to Colonel Vladimir Nikolaevich Podozerov. I carefully unscrew the fuse. Disassembly and study of the booby mine begins. And by evening, the staff typist was already reprinting the first instruction we had written for the neutralization of White-Finnish mines. But until the instructions reach the troops! While the fighters study it! And mines are everywhere: on roads, on bridges, railway tracks, abandoned houses. Mines lurk under the snow, hide under heaps of brushwood, under boards carelessly thrown on the side of the road, under the wheels of abandoned carts, even under the corpses of killed enemy soldiers ... And we leave for the advanced units to help the fighters not only with advice, but also with deed. The first mine trawl. Injury On one of the first days of the war, I saw GI Kulik, commander of the 1st rank, at the front. His car overtook the stuck part. The commander got out of the car with a displeased look:

- Why did you stop? Of the commanders who happened to be nearby, I am the eldest. I report that one car hit a mine ahead, and the other ran into a mine while trying to bypass. So, are we going to stand? There were no mine detectors in the troops then. There was no bomber nearby either. Together with an adjunct of the Military Transport Academy N.F. Avramenko, I had to do mine clearance myself. Having hastily made a trawl-cat, they destroyed anti-personnel mines of tension and pressure action. Then they found it, safely removed it, and at the request of Kulik, they immediately neutralized the already familiar anti-tank mine. - Look what a bastard! the commander

threw, looking at her. Soon after that I went to the Kirov factory. There they were supposed to start manufacturing the suspended mine trawl I proposed. With the participation of the well-known designer of powerful tanks, Hero of Socialist Labor Joseph Yakovlevich Kotin, a test copy of the trawl was made within a day. But, unfortunately, the first tests did not give the expected results. The plant began to improve the trawl, and I again returned to the front. Those were very, difficult days. Only on December 30, our troops crossed the cover line of the so-called Mannerheim Line. The breakthrough of the main line of Finnish fortifications began on February 11 and was completed twelve days later. Then it was necessary to overcome even the second lane. But

I didn't get to participate in it. An enemy sniper, who was lying in wait for a group of miners, put two bullets into my right arm. Arriving in time, the orderlies quickly applied a tourniquet and used bandages. However, the sleeve continued to fill with blood. Getting out of the area where I was wounded was almost impossible. Fighting friends, worried that I was losing a lot of blood, reported my condition to the Chief of Staff of the Leningrad Military District, General Chibisov. A transport plane was sent from Leningrad. Unfortunately, he swerved while landing on a forest lake. The pilot was rammed. Then a plane was sent from the district for two victims. He rushed us to Leningrad in time. When the operation began, I was already losing consciousness ... I spent two months in the hospital. In mid-March 1940, a large number of wounded in the battles for Vyborg were brought to our hospital. At 12 o'clock local time, the Finns were supposed to leave it to us. However, early in the morning, after artillery and air support, our troops were thrown to storm the destroyed and burning city and suffered huge losses. And this was done by order of Stalin. And in the hospital for the first time I heard that he did not feel sorry for Russian blood. In May, I was discharged from the hospital with a certificate of disability. This document stunned me. I did not know what I would do in the civil service. My hand was still hanging. Nerves were frayed. I couldn't use my right hand. But the transition to the civil service was out of the question. I showed the authorities a certificate, but asked to leave me in military service. They left me. It turned out not in vain ... As a result of a bloody unpopular war, which showed how weakened the Red Army was after the repressions of 1937-1938, the border was pushed westward by more than 10 kilometers from Leningrad, but Finland moved from the Anglo-French bloc to the Nazi camp, and this later led to the death of hundreds of thousands of Leningraders during the blockade, which would not have happened if we had not fought with Finland. Moreover, the war with Finland could lead us to a war against the anti-Hitler bloc if it dragged on for a few more days. The British were already preparing to strike at the Baku oil fields and a corps was already preparing to help the Finns.

## **Chapter 4. In the Main Military Engineering Directorate.**

Head of the Department of Barrages and Mining The hospital surgeons did the seemingly unthinkable by saving my arm. But in order to restore the activity of the nerves in the hand, long-term treatment from specialists was required. It was impossible to carry out such treatment at the training ground. And friends again showed touching concern: I was still on vacation when I learned about the new assignment. I was approved as the head of the department of barriers and mining of the Directorate of military engineering training of the Main Military Engineering Directorate of the Red Army. The new position excited and pleased. The experience of the war with the White Finns convincingly proved that even the most primitive, but skillfully placed mines are capable of inflicting significant damage on the advancing troops, making it difficult to use communication lines and surviving buildings. I wanted to believe that this experience would put an end to the underestimation of minefields and open up great prospects in our work. With such thoughts, I appeared to be introduced to the head of the Main Military Engineering Directorate of the Red Army, Hero of the Soviet Union, Major General Arkady Fedorovich Khrenov, whom I met more than once on the Karelian Isthmus. His low figure often appeared then in the most disastrous places. The general greeted me with a

friendly smile: "A mountain with a mountain, as they say... Sit down, Ilya Grigorievich. Let's talk. In June 1940, the Engineering Directorate of the Red Army began to be reorganized into the Main Military Engineering Directorate (GVIU). Behind a seemingly insignificant change in the name, an important meaning was hidden. On the shoulders of A.F. Khrenov fell the heavy concern of overcoming the backlog of our engineering troops in technical equipment and special training. A.F. Khrenov knew well the price of explosive barriers and, while developing the staff of the GVIU, provided for the creation of two independent departments: the department of obstacles and the department of electrical engineering. However, there were people who saw this as an excess. Instead of two departments capable in a short time

to carry out a large amount of urgent work, only one relatively small department of barriers and mining was formed as part of the Training Directorate. I was supposed to lead it. Arkady Fedorovich immediately set several specific tasks for me. They all flowed from one main thing - to quickly eliminate our backlog in the technique of mining and demining. Working with Arkady Fedorovich was easy and pleasant. We have begun updating the existing and creating new manuals and instructions, including the Regulations on the installation of operational barriers. The approval of this document by the People's Commissar of Defense made it possible to fully provide the troops with mine-explosive equipment and create the necessary stocks of it in warehouses. The work was carried out very intensively, but time - alas! — ran even faster. The international situation became more and more complicated. Our country was already in close contact in the west with the strong military machine of Nazi Germany, which crushed Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and then France. Germany's ally, Italy, ruled in Abyssinia. The threat of invasion hung over England. In anticipation of trouble It might have been expected that all these complications would not take us by surprise. But, having got acquainted with the preparations for the installation of a barrier in the border strip, I was simply stunned. Even what was done in this respect in 1926-1933 turned out to be virtually liquidated. There were no more warehouses with ready-made charges near important protected bridges and other objects. Not only were there no brigades designed to set up and overcome obstacles, but even special battalions. Only small subversive teams and companies of special equipment remained in the railway and engineering troops. But the question of creating special units for the device and overcoming mine-explosive obstacles, for disrupting the work of the enemy rear with the help of engineering mines was first raised by a group of commanders of the 4th railway regiment back in 1928! In Ukraine, for example, by 1932 there were four special battalions stationed at railway junctions in the border strip. There were such battalions in other districts. In late 1937 - early 1938, the Engineering Department developed

states of special mine-blasting battalions. But employees of the General Staff participated in the preparation of the materials, who, unfortunately, were repressed shortly after that, the Project was buried. The Ulyanovsk School of Special Equipment, the only educational institution that trained highly qualified commanders for units equipped with radio-controlled mines, was reorganized into a communications school. From 1934 to 1940, the number of tanks increased sharply and the quality of tanks improved, while our engineering anti-tank weapons remained at the level of the early thirties. A stupid situation has arisen. In 1939, when we came into contact with the weak armies of relatively small capitalist states - Poland, royal Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania - our borders were indeed locked. And when fascist Germany became our neighbor, the engineering defenses along the former western border turned out to be abandoned and even partially dismantled, and the construction of fortified areas on the new border was just unfolding ... Before the war with the White Finns, the leadership of the NPO clearly underestimated the engineering troops and the role of the Engineering Directorate of the Red Army. At least such an almost anecdotal fact testifies to the dismissive attitude towards the engineering troops: the head of the Engineering Department, General I.A. Petrov, learned by phone from the chief of engineers of the 7th Army, Colonel A.F. Khrenov, about the beginning of the war on the Karelian Isthmus. True, this incident also speaks of something else - about the passivity of General Petrov, about his weak contacts with the heads of the relevant departments of the General Staff. But one does not exclude the other. In 1940 the situation changed somewhat. The engineering support of the battle and operation, and at the same time the engineering troops, began to be treated with great attention. Taking advantage of this, the GVIU in the shortest possible time developed tactical and technical requirements for engineering mines for various purposes and for torpedo mines. The hard work of the Scientific Research Institute of Engineering Technology, laboratories and design bureaus gave positive results: prototypes of completely modern anti-personnel and anti-tank mines appeared. The situation was different with delayed-action mines. Rare in the history of war

cases where a new weapon is quickly recognized and brought into use in large numbers. But it often happens that a new combat weapon, even if successfully used in limited quantities, does not reveal all its capabilities. This allows those of little faith and conservatives to be skeptical about him. So it happened with the MZD. They appeared and were successfully applied in the First World War. But their number was literally counted in units. It is clear that in this case it was impossible to reveal all the possibilities of such mines. And although Soviet miners-enthusiasts created very "smart" MZDs, they were not mass-produced. Marshal Kulikov and some other leaders of the People's Commissariat of Defense, who controlled the allocation of funds and limits, belonged to just that category of people who primitively interpreted the Regulations of the Field Charter that in the event of aggression by the imperialists "we will wage the war offensively, transferring it to enemy territory". It was believed that we would not have to fight on our territory. And we don't need partisans on the other side. In addition, aviation will save us. I have already spoken about the significant shortcomings in the engineering preparation of the border strip to repel an enemy attack. Trying to rectify the situation, the head of the GVIU suggested using the old border fortresses and creating barrier zones. But this proposal was never accepted. Nothing, please! Even worse was the preparation of a guerrilla war in case of an enemy attack. Most of the partisans we had trained, especially the partisan saboteurs, have disappeared. They were repressed in 1937. No one was engaged in the development of special sabotage equipment. And there was no question of creating such a technique. If we now paid as much attention to the partisans as was paid in the late 1920s-30s, and if trained personnel were preserved, then our partisan detachments would be able to cut off the enemy troops at the front from their sources of supply at the very beginning of the war. I remember that I turned to Colonel M.A. It was about the implementation of measures for the comprehensive preparation of barriers at great depths along the new border. "Please, don't tell anyone about this," Mikhail Alexandrovich said anxiously. "Don't you know that the organization

warehouses of mine-explosive property and demolition teams along the border with the names of Tukhachevsky, Uboreich, Yakir and others like them? But even after this suggestion, I could not remain silent. I decided to turn to A.F. Khrenov. Arkady Fyodorovich, as usual, listened to me attentively. But as I spoke, a shadow of anxiety more than once came over his face. From the conversation, I understood: the head of the GVIU shares my fears, but, unfortunately, not everything depends only on him ... In the autumn of 1940, the situation on the western border became even more alarming. On September 27, the Berlin Pact was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan. On October 12, the Nazis entered Romania. Now, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, the German fascist hordes stood in front of our troops. In the second half of November, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia joined the Berlin Pact. Some argue that the sudden treacherous German attack was supposedly a response to the preparation of the Soviet Union to attack Germany. In fact, the Soviet Army was preparing to repel the attack. Of course, we learned about the secret plans of the Nazis much later. However, even then it was clear from everything that Nazi Germany was preparing an attack on our Motherland: fascist planes systematically violated our airspace, spies were sent in huge numbers, and the transfer of German troops to the East intensified. But the fortified areas on the old borders were still being disarmed, construction on the new borders was carried out at a snail's pace. Just as slowly, anti-tank and anti-personnel obstacles were erected near the border due to a lack of barriers. At the beginning of the winter of 1940, in the courtyard of the Second House of the NPO, I ran into G. I. Kulik. He recently received the rank of marshal and was at that time the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense. Kulik recognized me: "Aaaah... Minesweeper!" What is here? Couldn't have missed

turned up case. - I work

in the GVIU, Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union ... We are busy with mines. I wanted to talk to you... — Come

on in... In the office, I reminded the Deputy People's Commissar about the incident on the mined road in

Finland. - Then you did not wait for mine clearing, Comrade Marshal ... The mines spoiled a lot of blood for everyone. Turns out they're underestim



us and now! Leaning back in his chair, Kulik shook his head reproachfully and, smiling slyly, shook his finger at me: "But! But! You're

bending in the wrong direction, sapper! Mines are yours: they are needed, no one argues. Yes, not so many of them. necessary, as you calculate at Khrenov's, - But, Comrade Marshal ... - Wait a

minute! .. I repeat, not so many of them are needed. 14 is not as difficult as you suggest. Well, the White Finns had complex mines, a fact. So after all, there were simple ones? Why, then, is it necessary to invent something more complicated than Finnish mines? I'm telling you straight out, sapper: you won't succeed in this business. Mines are a powerful thing, but they are a tool for the weak, for those who are on the defensive. And we are strong. We don't need mines as much as we need demining equipment. Come on mine detectors, sapper, come on t

"Comrade Marshal, but the strongest armies" cannot always and everywhere attack. And in defense, mines are a powerful tool! They are also suitable for covering the flanks of advancing units. For airborne assaults, they are simply necessary. not a defensive, but an offensive weapon... They are the same torpedoes..." Kulik even grunted and waved his hand: "But! But! You're giving a lecture! Your position, I see, makes you turn your brains in

the wrong direction... They called your department the wrong way. In accordance with our military doctrine, it should be called the Department of Obstruction and Mine Clearance. Then you would have thought differently. Otherwise, they hardened: defense, defense ... Enough! By the way, I have an idea here for a pyrotechnic mine trawl, but there is no time to formalize "You just take it and think about it. It will be more useful than going around with complaints. Frowning, Kulik bent over the table, pushed some papers. It became clear that the conversation was over. \* \* \* On the instructions of General Khrenov, calculations were made of the need for troops in engineering mines for all purposes. We made our calculations proceeding from the essence of the Soviet military doctrine expressed in the draft Field Manual of 1939. Calculations showed that in the first days of the war the troops would need millions of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, hundreds of thousands of other engineering mines. But the leaders of the People's Commissariat of Defense considered even the most modest needs of the troops for mines to be overestimated, fantastic. Knowing all this, seeing that the proposals of the GVIU did not meet with support in the highest military instances, I decided to apply to the Central Committee of the CPSU (b). consulted with

workmates. General Khrenov did not mind. My immediate supervisor, Colonel M.A. Nagorny, did the same. And I sent a letter to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, in which I argued that engineering mines are needed not only in defense, but also in the offensive, and also tried to reveal the importance of special engineering units for arranging and overcoming various obstacles. In the end, the reports of A. F. Khrenov, and possibly this letter of mine, somewhat moved the matter from a dead point. We were asked to check the estimated number of mines required for the first six months of hostilities. Instead of the tiny norms established by Marshal Kulik (2,500-3,000 anti-tank and 3,000-4,000 anti-personnel mines per division), our calculated norms were adopted: 14,000-15,000 anti-tank and 18,000-20,000 anti-personnel mines per division. Based on this, the Red Army as a whole was supposed to have by the beginning of 1941 2,800,000 anti-tank and 4,000,000 anti-personnel mines, 120,000 delayed-action mines and 350,000 surprise mines. But the recognition of our calculations did not yet mean their implementation. By January 1, 1941, the Red Army had only about a million anti-tank mines, and did not receive delayed action mines and surprise mines at all. By the beginning of the war, even half of the minimum number of engineering mines needed by the troops, even with the successful development of hostilities, was not stocked. There were no special sabotage mines at all.

## Chapter 5 Tank designer Kotin

During my work at the GVIU, the Red Army conducted more than one exercise. I happened to attend some of them. Here I met both old acquaintances and new enthusiastic commanders, with whom I was brought together by a commonality of views on the use of mines in modern warfare. But I also met with competitors of miners - with those who defended the idea of creating defensive anti-tank weapons from concrete, earth and steel, who advocated anti-tank ditches and gouges. Each of these meetings took place. interesting in its own way. ... In the autumn of 1940,

tests were carried out on the Karelian Isthmus to overcome various anti-tank obstacles. All the obstacles built by that time were easily overcome by the T-34 and KV tanks. Sometimes with the help of simple devices, sometimes without them. Joseph Yakovlevich Kotin, the designer of heavy tanks and my old acquaintance, was downright jubilant: neither gouges, nor ditches, nor other barriers justified themselves. It must be said that few people in the GVIU overestimated the importance of such obstacles. Both Major General A.F. Khrenov and Colonel M.A. Nagorny were well aware of the significant shortcomings of "passive" obstacles: laboriousness in construction, ease of detection from the ground and from the air, and, ultimately, relatively easy surmountability by tanks. Therefore, during the exercises, they were more interested in the process of overcoming ditches, gouges and scarps, rather than using them as barriers. Naturally, I did not fail to taunt Kotin:

- Will the tanks be able to overcome explosive barriers with the same ease, Joseph Yakovlevich? "Pip on your tongue," Kotin quickly responded. - You know ... By the way, do you have any mines? "We do," I

evaded a direct answer. Kotin looked at me expressively, wanted to say something, but turned away and remained silent ... In my opinion, he also perfectly understood that

anti-tank mines are much more reliable and effective than ditches. After all, mines are capable of not only delaying tanks, but also incapacitating them, even destroying them. In addition, mines do not unmask the defense, they can be moved to especially dangerous areas and quickly installed there ... A good school of combat training for all branches of the military was the autumn tactical exercises of 1940, held initially in the Moscow Military District, and then in all border military districts. In the course of these exercises, the GVIU widely and comprehensively tested in practice the high-speed methods we had developed for organizing, building and engineering equipment for defensive positions and starting areas for an offensive. Unfortunately, the exercises were not combined with organizational measures. In the autumn of 1940, privates who had served the established term were dismissed from the Armed Forces. Many of them had combat experience. Called again for the winter of 1940/41, they only underwent initial training. General Karbyshev On one of the tests in the spring of 1941, I happened to meet D. M. Karbyshev again. The weather was disgusting. The wet snow melted as soon as it touched the ground. Tankodrome is wet. The test participants traveled on all-terrain vehicles. And it had to happen: a caterpillar jumped off the car of D. M. Karbyshev. The driver began to fix the all-terrain vehicle. The commanders sitting in the back of the car, smoking, watched his work. Someone suggested leaving the car and walking to the test site. Dmitry Mikhailovich looked sternly at the speaker. "A damaged car should not be abandoned, but quickly repaired," he said firmly,

"I'll ask you to get off the all-terrain vehicle!" Everyone helped the driver. Including the major, who suggested that we go on foot a few minutes ago. Karbyshev himself did not stand idly by. Soon the caterpillar was put on, and the car started off. This incident made a great impression not only on those who traveled with D. M. Karbyshev. Later, already during the tests, one of the drivers asked me: - Comrade colonel, what is the name of the general? Is he standing and writing something? -

Karbyshev Dmitry Mikhailovich.

This one won't let you down! At first glance, he seems fragile, but probably went through more than one war ... I talked about Karbyshev.

Did he manage to fight the Japanese? It's hard to give him even fifty, and Thirty-five years have passed since the Russo-Japanese War! the driver said incredulously. How surprised the soldier was when he heard that the general was in his seventies! .. D. M. Karbyshev was one of those who fully shared our anxieties and concerns about providing troops with engineering equipment. He said more than once that engineering mines are the strongest weapon in the fight against the enemy, that this was especially convincingly proven in the battles on the Karelian Isthmus, and that, when arming our troops, we must remember the instruction of V. I. Lenin: "The best army, the most devoted cause of the revolution, people will be immediately exterminated by the enemy if they are not sufficiently armed ... ". "The armament of the modern army is by no means limited to firearms," the lieutenant general reminded. Yes, there were many memorable meetings. I had a chance, for example, to participate in the testing of the original anti-tank flying mine proposed by General I.P. Galitsky. The mine was designed in this way: when a tank ran into a stretch or a contactor, an anti-tank mine flew out from the side and hit the armored vehicles on board. Ivan Pavlovich developed it back in the early thirties, but this mine never went into mass production. Engineer Linkov In the second half of March 1941, Vladimir Vasilyevich Glukhov, the head of the Bureau of Inventions of the NPO, called me: - Engineer Grigory Matveyevich Linkov wants to see you. A few minutes later, a heavily built, medium-sized military man with a shaved head entered the department and showed me a diagram of a mine controlled by wires. It was also intended mainly to deal with enemy

tanks. Grigory Matveyevich did not know that such a system had been repeatedly proposed before him. But for its implementation, many thousands of kilometers of wire were required, which we almost did not let go. This is how I met the future legendary partisan commander. In July 1941 we met again. Both were happy to meet. I spoke about the training of partisans and was not surprised that Grigory Matveyevich, at forty-two, wanted to fight behind enemy lines. Looking at this self-confident

a stocky Uralian, an experienced warrior and a competent engineer, one could say for sure that with such a commander the partisans would not be lost. I remember we used to have lunch together. Linkov very convincingly argued that in the current situation, strikes against the enemy's stretched communications would be very noticeable at the front as well. - The snake needs to step on the tail!

Linkov spoke with conviction. She can't turn her head. She now has to look only ahead, otherwise her head will be cut off at the front! Grigory Matveyevich unlimited possibilities for guerrilla warfare, and only people are needed who are able to beat            was convinced            What            at            US            there are enemies with the help of modern technology, including with the help of mines. He firmly believed in the high patriotic feelings of the Soviet people, who involuntarily found themselves behind enemy lines, and brilliantly understood the importance of the geographical factor in the partisan struggle against a motorized enemy ... A year later, I learned about the remarkable deeds of Linkov. His name thundered from Belarus to the Smolensk region. Grigory Matveyevich, we often met after the war. They even worked together on issues of the history of partisan struggle. We became close friends. It is so unfortunate that an absurd incident at the beginning of 1962 cut short his bright and beautiful life. Mine Claims Cut As head of a department at the GVIU, I continued to maintain close ties with the Central Directorate of Military Communications. V. A. Antipin, a well-known mine-explosive enthusiast, worked there, and I got the idea through him to influence General I. A. Petrov, on whom the supply of engineering mines to the troops largely depended. Our ally was the Deputy Chief of Military Communications of the Red Army, General 3rd. Kondratiev. He gave the GVIU an application for 120,000 delayed-action mines for the railway troops. This application has undergone a thousand-fold reduction. The GVIU was able to allocate only ... 120 MZD to the military railway workers. At the beginning of May 1941, after Stalin's speech at the reception of graduates of military academies, everything that was done to install barriers and mines began to slow down even more. And although such obsessed as M. V. Onuchin, A. K. Semin, V. A. Antipin, B. A. Epov, Ya. M. Rabinovich, V. P. Yastrebov, P. G. Radevich continued to work over the improvement of the mine

technology, although the enthusiasts of our department AM Podovinnikov, AT Kovalev and GS Vakulovsky strongly believed in their weapons, the results left much to be desired. Our efforts were a drop in the ocean.

## **PART IV. PASS INVISIBLE**



## Chapter 1. June 1941

Exercises on the Western Border In the twentieth of June 1941, the General Staff of the Red Army planned to conduct exercises for the troops of the Special Western Military District. From the Main Military Engineering Directorate of the Red Army, two people were sent to the exercises: Deputy chief management military engineering training lieutenant colonel 3rd. Kolesnikov and me, who at that time held the position of head of the department of barriers - and mining. On a warm, stuffy evening on June 19, we left Moscow to introduce ourselves to the command in Minsk, and then continue on our way to Brest, to the headquarters of future exercises. Gradually it got dark. Outside the car window, from the depths of the white-trunked groves, a thick blue crept out onto the edges, spruce groves closed into black walls, it was fresher, the sweet smell of hay and roadside swamps was mixed with the bitter smell of steam locomotive smoke. Tired of the pre-departure fuss, Kolesnikov soon fell asleep, and I lay with my eyes open for a long time ... There were many engineers obsessed with mine technology in the Red Army. I myself was also a supporter of explosive barriers. More than once I went with Spanish, German, French, British, Yugoslav, Polish, American soldiers behind enemy lines, together we completed more than one responsible and risky task, widely using a variety of mines. Our anti-train mines became a threat to the railway communications of the Spanish fascists. We gave surprise after surprise to enemy sappers trying to clear mines. The enemy could not ensure the safety of his roads even when he sent a whole regiment of infantry to guard a hundred-kilometer section of the road! How could I not promote mines?.. Remembering Spain, I remembered, of course, the Soviet volunteers who fought against fascism there. In Minsk, where we were going, we were to meet with two "Spaniards": with the commander of the district, General of the Army D. G. Pavlov, and the chief of artillery of the district, Major General N. A. Klich. How are they now, in high positions? Do they remember? A few hours before the wa

- We're coming, comrade commanders! It was early, sunny morning. On the forecourt square, the headquarters "emka" was blackening lonely. The senior lieutenant who met us said that the head of the engineering department of the district, General Vasiliev, asked to come to the headquarters. And why can't

he sleep? Kolesnikov was surprised. General Vasiliev, clean-shaven, trim, was a model of excellent health and excellent mood. He said that everything was ready at the training ground for the upcoming exercises, and offered to go to the chief of staff of the district.

- Is it really because of the exercises that all the authorities are already at the headquarters? asked I.

- Bosses always have reasons for not getting enough sleep! Vasilyev joked. The chief of staff of the district, V.E. Klimovskikh, unlike General Vasiliev, looked gloomy and withdrawn. I greeted him with a nod, but did not look up from the handset. A minute or two later he apologized, said that he was extremely busy:

- See you at the range! The district commander, Pavlov, also spoke on the phone. Irritably demanded from the interlocutor to show more restraint. They showed the commander the test program. He looked at it and noted with displeasure that the engineers were back to their own: too much attention was paid to the construction of anti-tank barriers and too little to ways to overcome them. At this time, Klimovskikh entered:

"Comrade General of the Army, this is an important matter..." Pavlov glanced at us:

- Think about the program. Goodbye. See you at the exercises. Until we closed the door behind us, General Klimovskikh did not utter a word. Puzzled and alarmed by what I saw and heard, I decided to see General Klich, commander of the district artillery. Maybe he can clarify something? — Wolf! cried Klich, remembering my Spanish pseudonym. - For

exercises? Happy for you, happy! But I'm afraid now is not the time for exercises. He said that the Nazis were constantly pulling up troops to the border, bringing up artillery and tanks, making reconnaissance flights over our territory, and many

commanders are on vacation, most of the vehicles and tractor-tractors of the artillery regiments are taken to the construction of fortified areas.

- If something happens - guns without traction! Klich was indignant. - Pavlov reports to Moscow every day about the seriousness of the situation, and they answer us so that they don't spread panic and that everything is all right for Stalin. known.

"But German troops have been withdrawn to the eastern borders of Germany for rest, haven't they?" I cautiously remarked. - In any case, the TASS report of the 14th says so. - I'm not a TASS employee,

but a soldier! — cut Klich. "And used to keeping gunpowder dry. Especially when dealing with a fascist bastard! Who am I supposed to believe? Hitler? What are you, wolf?" It was not possible to continue the conversation: Klich was urgently called to Pavlov. The day passed in preparation for the exercises: the points of the test program were clarified and changed in accordance with the wishes of the district commander. At the end of the day I tried to see Klich again, but to no avail.

- Go on vacation! General Vasiliev said. - The morning is wiser than the evening. If something serious had happened, the exercises would have been canceled long ago, and, as you can see, everything is going according to plan. There was a reason in the words of the head of the engineering department. We went to the hotel, slept well, and in the early morning of June 21, on Saturday, we left by train for Kobrin, where the headquarters of the 4th Army, which covered the Brest direction, was located; it was necessary to see the chief of staff of the engineering troops of the army, Colonel A. I. Proshlyakov, to discuss with him a change in the exercise program. We got to Kobrin in the evening. Proshlyakov confirmed that the Nazis were pulling up military equipment to the Western Bug, built a lot of observation towers, and installed camouflage shields in open places. "We were warned that the German military

could resort to provocations and that it was impossible to succumb to provocations," Proshlyakov said calmly. - Nothing. There are no faint-hearted people at the army headquarters. The head of the engineering department arranged for us to spend the night in his own office. We agreed that in the morning we would go to Brest together. Proshlyakov left, and Kolesnikov and I set out to wander around the picturesque Saturday town before going to sleep. About twenty-two o'clock we returned to the headquarters. The attendant reported:

called from the district, the exercises are canceled, we should return to Minsk. I involuntarily recalled the arguments of General Vasiliev ...

- Will the German generals really decide on a provocation? Kolesnikov asked, sitting on the edge of the staff sofa and pulling off his boots. - How do you think?

"Sleep well, Zakhar Iosifovich!" We'll find out in the morning! I replied. 22nd of June. Corbin We woke up suddenly. Either blasting, or a bomb fell off the plane ... Explosions, following one after another, merged into a monstrous roar. People were running along the headquarters corridors, a command was heard to leave the premises. Buttoning up as we went, Kolesnikov and I also ran out into the street. The squadron of fascist bombers went straight to the headquarters. We are across the square, across the ditch, into some kind of garden. Rushed to the ground in time. We saw how the building of the army headquarters was shrouded in smoke and dust. And the bombers kept coming. Explosions tore and tore the ground, there was a breeze, smoke rose into the sky ... The enemy bombed the defenseless town for about an hour. Having found out from the surviving duty officer that the headquarters of the 4th Army would immediately be redeployed to Bukhovichi, Kolesnikov and I decided to go to Brest anyway: there, in Brest, representatives of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff, who else, if not them, can find out what's going on? We sat in the first passing car. On the sides of the highway leading to Kobrin, women who had left the military camp were dragging suitcases and baskets with belongings. The commanders ran towards them, hurrying to the duty station. Kobrin was on fire. The square near the telegraph pole with a loudspeaker was crowded with people. We stopped too. Familiar callsigns of Moscow brightened up their faces. People eagerly looked at the black plate of the loudspeaker. The news broadcast has begun. We hung on every word. They heard about the labor successes of the country, about the ripening harvest, about the early fulfillment

of plans, about the celebrations in the Mari ASSR: right now, now ... - The German news agency reports ... - the announcer began. Nowhere, never later did I hear such silence as at that moment on Kobrin Square. But the announcer was talking about the sinking of English ships. About the bombing of Scottish cities by German aircraft, about the war in Syria - about something else, but not about an enemy attack on our country. The release of the

weather. People stood, did not leave the place and we: maybe there will be a special message or a statement from the government? But the morning gymnastics lesson began, as usual. Then people began to disperse, some ran. Our driver slammed the door. Trucks with women and children, who, perhaps, had become orphans, were already rolling eastward through Kobrin. And above the fires, above the smoke, a cheerful, energetic voice was heard: - Spread your arms to the side / sit down! Get up! Sit down!.. Many years have passed, and as I

now see the dusty, burning-smelling Kobrin square, and the black plate of the loudspeaker above it, I have not forgotten that gymnastics lesson. Interrupted business trip Having learned from the refugees that the fascist troops had crossed the border and that a battle was going on in Brest, Kolesnikov and I went to Bukhovichi, to the headquarters of the 4th Army, where we were informed that at 05:25 a telegram had been received from the headquarters of the Western Special Military District, requiring to raise troops and act in combat. "We must urgently return to Minsk, Ilya Grigoryevich," Kolesnikov became worried. We drove through Pinsk. We got there around noon. Near the city, at a military

airfield, pilots and personnel of the airfield maintenance unit rushed around the burning aircraft. Pinsk itself had not yet been bombed, but the city looked alarmed: the streets were unusually crowded, there were crowds of men near the military registration and enlistment offices. The party city committee bombarded me with questions that neither I nor Kolesnikov could answer. However, no one in the city committee doubted that the enemy would not reach Pinsk, located two hundred kilometers from the border. We were placed on a truck carrying evacuated families of servicemen to Minsk. We arrived at Minsk the next morning. On the outskirts, cattle beaten by shrapnel were lying around. Fires smoked in the city itself. The headquarters of the special military district had already been renamed the headquarters of the Western Front. General Vasiliev, far from being as calm as two days ago, said that no one really knew the situation at the front: communication with the troops was systematically broken.

"I can please you with one thing," the general said, "this morning the troops have been delivering counterattacks. Directive of the People's Commissar of Defense! Apparently, the head of the engineering troops was nervous, because he did not notice that the message about the lack of communication with the troops did not agree well with

reports of counterattacks. From Vasiliev's office, they contacted Moscow, with the Main Military Engineering Directorate. - Return

immediately! I heard the distant voice of the head of the combat training department, Colonel Nagorny, in the receiver. - Do you hear? Immediately! There was no longer a regular railway connection with the capital. The same general Vasiliev helped out: he gave a passenger car. Saying goodbye, he asked to expedite the delivery of explosives and mines to the front, primarily anti-tank ones. Mobilization measures Colonel Nagorny, who outwardly looked so much like Rokossovsky that they were sometimes confused, immediately led Kolesnikov and me to General Galitsky, who was acting head of the GVIU. Ivan Pavlovich Galitsky left the table to shake hands with us. He is still straight, thin at the waist, his youthful face is clean-shaven, his black mustache is neatly trimmed, his hair is parted flawlessly, only his eyes are unusually intense, but this is understandable: Galitsky now bears all responsibility for the engineering troops, for the reliability of fortified areas near the western borders of the country, for providing the fighting armies with engineering equipment, engineering means of combating the enemy, in turn, explosives and mines. According to General Vasiliev, we are reporting on the situation on the Western Front, we are passing on a request to provide the front with as many mines and explosives as possible. Realizing that we were tired and hungry, Galitsky offered to have lunch and return to the headquarters: - Warn the families that you won't get home today: urgent work. I called

my wife. Anna is a courageous person, she was with me in Spain, went with miners to the fascist rear. And yet she could not help exclaiming: "He's back!" And I just didn't change my mind! — Are the children healthy? "They're all right.

How are you - Fine. I'll come tomorrow. - OK.

It's good that he's

alive..." Anna said. From the first day of the war, the Main

Military Engineering Directorate was given numerous tasks: to form new units, organize courses for training specialists in explosive obstacles, and maneuver the available

forces and means. Kolesnikov and I joined this difficult work. On the morning of June 26, Colonel Nagorny called:

- The People's Commissar of Defense ordered to immediately help the troops in the construction of barriers. For this purpose, operational engineering groups are being created. You are appointed head of the JIG on the Western Front. We propose Colonel Ovchinnikov Mikhail Semenovich as a deputy. No objections, I guess?

- No. What can we count on? - We will single out four demolition specialists from the command staff, three sapper battalions, six thousand anti-tank mines and twenty-five tons of explosives. I looked puzzled at Nagorny. He frowned: - I know that this is not enough for a day, wo

no more! Let's send it! Well, you will mine not in the same way as in the exercises, but in relation to the circumstances. In the evening, Galitsky gathered the commanders and engineers sent to the operational groups. In addition to Ovchinnikov and me, military engineer 2nd rank V.N. Yastrebov and Colonel P.K. Sluchevsky appeared. It turned out that the People's Commissar of Defense, Marshal Tymoshenko, was calling. I met Marshal more than once. And on the Karelian Isthmus, and in the exercises. The memory kept the image of a tall, broad-shouldered, self-confident, tough and loud-voiced man. Therefore, entering the huge office, I did not immediately recognize him in that stooped, looking extremely tired military man, who was sitting at a wide desk near the draped window. The chiefs of operational-engineering groups received from the People's Commissar of Defense the broadest powers to destroy military facilities in front of the advancing enemy. Information about the routes of the JIU, about the deployment of the headquarters of the fronts and armies operating in the directions where it was supposed to use explosive barriers and destroy various objects, should have been obtained from the chief of the operational department of the General Staff, Major General G.K. Malandin. In Malandin's office, staff commanders - "directed" - reported on the situation. Malandin, tall and lean, with slicked-back blond hair, noted on the map the changes in the position of the troops. Galitsky asked to pay attention to the heads of operational and engineering groups.

"The situation on the fronts is extremely difficult, comrades! Malandin

explained. "I won't go into details, you will recognize them on the spot, at the headquarters of the fronts. But "remember yourself and make all your fighters and commanders remember: you are covering the Moscow strategic direction. Moscow, comrades! Inviting us to the map, the general showed where the enemy tanks were most active, asked Galitsky in which direction whose group would work, and suggested memorizing "the location of

the headquarters of the fronts: - There is no need to write it down, this is top secret data. Then Malandin called a staff worker, "who handed each of us a mandate signed by the People's Commissar of Defense. Where to get mines ?! In his office, Galitsky recalled that preparations for the destruction and mining of the highway should be carried out to a depth of 20 kilometers, after breaking the highway into sections and leaving security units at the head sections, in order to put the barriers into action immediately if necessary.. I didn't forget; bridges: do not be late with the explosion, but do not rush, so that our own troops would not be left without crossings ... A little later, at Nagorny, we began to count how many and what kind of mines will be needed in the most important areas of the Western Front, say, where, according to the directive of the People's Commissar of Defense of June 25, a reserve army group under the command of Marshal S. M. Budyonny was to be deployed. The length of the line defined for these armies was about five hundred kilometers Two hundred of them did not have any significant water and other natural barriers capable of delaying tanks. According to our calculations, it turned out that to cover the line of the reserve armies, at least 200 thousand anti-tank mines, many more anti-personnel mines and almost six thousand delayed-action mines would be required. Nagorny, looking at the sheet of numbers, gritted his teeth. Driver Volodya Shleger I received the three sapper battalions assigned to the JIG on the night of June 27 and early in the morning, hastily saying goodbye to my family, left the city. We were moving along the Minsk highway to the west. Sitting in the front seat of a green pickup next to a young blond-haired and blue-eyed driver who called himself Volodya, I looked at the gray strip of the roadway, at the sleeping villages, at the dewy grasses of the meadows, at



the tops of the fir trees, piercing the predawn twilight and piercing into the pink gold of the dawn, but the peace and beauty of the surrounding nature only intensified the anxiety that did not leave me. I had confidence in the group commanders. The lean, somewhat reserved Colonel Mikhail Semenovitch Ovchinnikov, head of the 1st department in the obstacles department, the heavily built Major A.T. Kovalev, majors L.N. excellent professionals, possessing both courage and resourcefulness. It is not too disturbing that the sapper battalions attached to the group are staffed with "reserves": the fighters are Soviet people, they have enough courage, and experience is a thing to come. It was embarrassing and alarming that there were very few mines and explosives! The task of the group is extremely responsible. We are obliged to fulfill it. But how? .. Thinking about the soldiers, I remembered that I had not bothered to find out the name of the driver. He, having heard what they were asking, burst into a thick blush, answered not immediately and somehow abruptly:

— Schleger, Comrade Colonel. I glanced at driver, not understanding the cause of his excitement. He explained it himself:

“My mother is Russian, and my father is German, Comrade Colonel. But even in the last world war he fought against the Kaiser, he was chosen as a civilian commander! Schleger's fingers literally squeezed the steering wheel.

“Watch the road,” I said, to reassure the fighter, I added: “In Spain, Volodya,

my comrades in the fight were Germans, and Americans, and Czechs, and Slovaks, and French. It is not nationality that decides, the main thing is whose side you are on. So?

- So! Volodya breathed a sigh of relief. A hair's breadth from the execution In front of Vyazma, on the side of the road, stood a column of fifty empty trucks. A tall senior lieutenant came out onto the highway, raised his hand, warning about something. They got out of the cars. Immediately heard the roar of the bombing. Bombed somewhere ahead. The senior lieutenant turned out to be the head of the column heading to Bialystok. He was perplexed: can fascist planes fly from Poland to Vyazma? I did not begin to tell that the range of enemy vehicles is not so great and that they apparently no longer fly from Polish airfields: it seemed much more important that at least

seventy tons of explosives, which we were supposed to receive in Vyazma. I presented the senior lieutenant with a mandate, ordered him to go under my command, and in just two hours, having received explosives, we moved on in a huge column. Sixty kilometers west of Vyazma, near the bridge across the Dnieper, I again took out my mandate, presented it to the head of the bridge's security and announced that the bridge should be prepared for destruction. Before I had time to finish this, we were surrounded and disarmed. The head of the security

contemptuously threw: - Your masters work badly! They don't even know to whom the protection of the bridges is subordinated. Now you're covered, you fascist bastard! Ovchinnikov and I looked at each other dumbfounded. But the boss is right! The protection of bridges was transferred to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, and our mandates were signed by the People's Commissar of Defense! Fortunately, the district department of the NKVD quickly sorted out the misunderstanding and apologized, and I recall this episode only to show how great the vigilance of the Soviet people was. This vigilance helped both military personnel and local residents to catch and neutralize many Nazi spies.

## Chapter 2. At the Moscow strategic

Near Mogilev In the tall pine forest there was a smell of RESIN and heated needles, black telephone wires stretched over the branches and supported by poles. The tarpaulins of staff tents shone through the freshly cut branches, tables exposed to the air, where staff commanders worked, and the crackling of typewriters was heard. The commander was in the troops. We were received by the Chief of Staff of the Western Front, General Klimovskikh. He looked tired. I filed a combat note. The note said that we brought three times more explosives and mines than we received in Moscow (we disposed of it on our own responsibility on the way), but Klimovskikh shook his head: not enough! Looking intently with inflamed eyes, he ordered:

- Familiarize yourself with the situation and immediately to the destruction of roads and railways! All forces there! We were briefed on the situation in the engineering department, with the reservation that the information about the enemy received a few hours ago might not be entirely accurate. It was immediately reported that only three sapper and two pontoon battalions remained in the composition of the engineering troops of the front: other units are fighting in encirclement. We distributed with General Vasiliev the available units and materiel along the highways, where the barriers needed to be created in the first place. The operational-engineering group was divided into three detachments. A detachment of Colonel Ovchinnikov and Major Afanasyev was sent to operate in the Polotsk-Lepel-Vitebsk triangle, a detachment of Major Umanets - on the Minsk-Borisov-Orsha highway, a detachment of Major Kovalev - in the direction of Minsk - Mogilev. The most dangerous was the area allocated to the detachment of Major Umanets, and the major received it. somewhat more explosives and mines than other commanders. The reserve of explosives and anti-tank mines was concentrated at the command post of the operational-engineering group near Orsha. I will say right away that the position of the group was not easy. At first it was difficult to understand how far the enemy had managed to advance, where the fighting was going

We didn't have radio communications, and to maintain contact with the detachments we had to use the front's wired communications, and the telephone and telegraph in those days were not very reliable, and the detachments were often at a considerable distance from the military telephone switches or telegraph nodes. The groups were rescued only by the experience and courage of the detachment commanders and the presence of a significant number of vehicles "grabbed" on the way to the front. In those distant, tragic days, I had to visit the CP and the headquarters of the Western Front. Communication with the troops was being improved, it became possible to foresee the actions of the enemy, and the headquarters tried to use this opportunity. General Pavlov On the second or third day of my stay near Mogilev, I finally got the opportunity to introduce myself to the front commander. General Pavlov, thinner, haggard, was no longer interested in overcoming obstacles, but in the ways of their construction, mines, mainly anti-tank ones. "Lack of explosives?" Try to

get more, Wolf! - said Pavlov, calling me, like Klich, by a Spanish pseudonym. - Demand from Moscow! In the end, near Teruel and on the Ebro somehow got out of the situation? And houses and walls help! The commander promised to do everything possible so that the engineering group would receive the necessary support promptly. However, Pavlov did not have long to command the front: on July 1, 1941, the State Defense Committee removed the command of the Western Front: Pavlov, Klimovsky, Klich, placing the blame on them for the unsuccessful start of the war with the aggressor. They were shot. Lieutenant General A.I. Eremenko assumed temporary command of the troops of the front, and Major General G.K. Malandin took the place of the Klimovskys. Change of command often causes difficulties in command and control of troops. They also appeared with Eremenko and Balandin. And yet the troops of the Western Front, reinforced by the armies of the Reserve, although they were still forced to retreat, fought, fought desperately, and their resistance gradually increased. Again homemade. The first exit to the rear of the Germans What did the sappers of the operational-engineering group do in those hot and bloody July days? We mined in advance and timely destroyed bridges on railways and roads, and also undermined

rails and asphalt concrete pavement of highways, mined the alleged places where the enemy bypassed the destroyed sections of the road, mined the highways themselves after the withdrawal of our troops, arranged blockages in front of fascist reconnaissance motorcyclists, in front of enemy motorized infantry and tanks. We had to work under the constant influence of enemy aircraft, often under machine-gun fire, the detachments suffered losses, and yet their actions exceeded our expectations: people showed great courage, remarkable endurance, did not get lost in the most difficult, even critical situations. It was not the people that bothered us then, but the mines. Anti-tank mines in service with the Red Army. In a collision with Wehrmacht tank formations, it soon became clear that these mines did not have sufficient power: exploding under the tracks of enemy vehicles, only two or three tracks were interrupted. "The fascist tankers, if they are not hindered by artillery fire, eliminate the malfunction in about half an hour and go into battle again. Trying to strengthen the effect of anti-tank mines, the sappers of the operational-engineering group doubled them. But even then, the mines damaged only the undercarriage of the enemy vehicle ... Withdraw the tank was completely out of order, the mines still could not destroy the crew of the tank. Yes, and they were installed by the sappers of the group in small numbers, mainly when strengthening the field defense of their own troops. To mine the highways and the alleged places to bypass the destroyed sections of the highways, mines were required much more powerful and not ordinary, but delayed action. After all, we installed anti-tank mines on highways only after the withdrawal of our rear guards, and the fascist vanguards hurried behind our rear guards, and sappers suffered losses, and the enemy easily discovered, destroyed or bypassed mines. I had to remember Spain, Spanish friends, Masters of making mines and grenades from tin cans, tea cans, leaky gas cans and other rubbish thrown into a landfill, remember our land mines on the roads near Cordoba and Granada. Having gathered the commanders of the detachments, I showed how to make time bombs from improvised materials. They got down to business right away. Combined-arms commanders reacted to our plan

skeptically, they did not believe that homemade products would be useful, but disbelief very soon gave way to praises and thanks. I remembered Spain and the Spanish experience, of course, not only because the troops did not have enough delayed action mines. Events have shown that the enemy invades the territory of our Motherland mainly in the area of railways and highways, he does not control and cannot control the huge tracts of forests, fields and swamps along these highways. Thus, the opportunity arose, as in Spain, to transfer the action of miners behind enemy lines! While working in the defense zone of the 20th Army, I shared my thoughts with the Chief of Staff of the Army, General N. V. Korneev. A born scout, Korneev immediately set about sending volunteer miners to the enemy's rear. A few days later, we sent a group of fighters to the front line, led by Sergeant Koshel. Volunteers were to mine the section of the Minsk-Moscow highway restored by the enemy, a few kilometers east of Kokhanova. Koshel's group safely reached the indicated area, laid mines, made sure that they worked, blowing up several trucks with military equipment and soldiers, safely reached our trenches near the village of Russian Selets. The sergeant and his comrades talked about what they experienced and saw excitedly, with surprise: it is one thing to imagine the effect of mines mentally, and quite another to watch how mines destroy the enemy in his own rear when he is completely helpless. The sortie of Koshel's group confirmed the assumption of the vulnerability of fascist communications, and we would not fail to send new groups of sappers to the enemy's rear, however, the technical capabilities of the operational-engineering group were running out, we had no more delayed action contactors, we were running out of explosives, and the course of events required other, larger-scale solutions to disrupt the operation of the enemy rear. However, none of us, of course, can make these decisions on our own, could not.

## Chapter 3

One day, when I arrived at the headquarters of the Western Front, I saw Voroshilov. Accompanied by an unfamiliar general and two colonels, the marshal walked to the tents of the political administration. Noticing me, he stopped, gave a sign to come up, asked what I was doing. After listening to the answer, he asked if I was preparing partisans.

- Partisan? .. No way, Comrade Marshal. Actually... - Okay, okay. I'll call you and put you on the case. You are free. The meeting

was exciting. It turns out that they remember me, and the training of the partisans has begun! Still needed partisans! On that day, I still did not know about the Directive of the Central Committee of the All-Union

Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of June 29, indicating to the leaders. party and Soviet organizations in the front-line regions on the need to deploy in the rear.

enemy of guerrilla warfare. It was only three days later that I heard about the party's call to kindle a guerrilla war from a speech on the radio by I.

V. Stalin. Then I guessed that Voroshilov spoke to me for a reason. True, all thoughts and all the time were occupied by the construction of barriers

in front of the advancing enemy, but the words of the marshal were not forgotten. In the tenth of July, when the situation changed, the pace of

the enemy's offensive slowed down, and the capabilities of the operational engineering group were running out, I began to recall Voroshilov's

promise more often and worry why he didn't call ... In the early morning of July 11, Semenikhin and I checked the work of the units quickly -an

engineering group preparing for the destruction of the Minsk-Moscow highway in the section between Krasnoy and Gusin. The sun was rising,

long blue shadows of roadside firs and pines lay on the damp concrete, the gravel of the roadsides darkened, guns roared on the nearby front

line, and the first Junkers, Heinkels and Fokkers were about to appear. Near the site where the sappers worked, people were bustling about.

Who is standing, who is sitting on the edge of the ditch ... Leaving the pickup truck, we went to the sappers. The chubby commander of the

department reported that he was digging under the concrete cover of the highway. Ne

he will finish the report, there was a tall artillery captain. As soon as the squad leader fell silent, the captain raised his hand to his cap:

"May I address you, Comrade Colonel?" It was Vasiliev. He started the war near Alytus, west of Vilnius. On the third day of fighting, Vasiliev's division found itself surrounded. Trying to break through the fascist barriers, he shot the ammunition, but failed. Vasiliev ordered the locks to be removed from the cannons, led the fighters to the east through forests and impassable roads, bypassing enemy columns moving along highways and villages and cities captured by the Nazis. In Nalibokskaya Pushcha and near Begoml, they fell behind the division, fifty-five people were lost. The rest swore to each other to either die or break through to their own. Four were killed, five were wounded and left in remote villages in the care of the inhabitants, and Thirty-six, led by Captain Vasiliev, made their way. I looked around the people. There were at least a hundred of them! The rest

are on their way! Vasiliev explained. A motley army stuck to him: some in full uniform, others in civilian clothes, some with weapons, others empty-handed. There were also sappers: a lieutenant, two sergeants and private Kremnev, whose last name I remember, because he even saved a gas mask in the environment! Having figured out who they were and where they came from, I left them in the operational-engineering group, which, by the way, I never regretted later, and sent the rest of the encirclement under the command of Captain Vasiliev to the nearest checkpoint. For a long time I looked after the departing column. What does it get? Two days ago, with great difficulty, we sent a group of five sappers to the enemy rear, under the command of Sergeant Koshel, and now we have received from the enemy rear a reinforcement of a hundred, if not more, who broke through with battle! No words, the captain and his people remained true to their oath, did not spare their lives in order to unite with their troops, but they could become a formidable and powerful force that destroys the enemy's rear! They would not have to wander off-road, bury themselves in swamps and thickets, if they had at least the slightest idea of \u200b\u200bguerrilla warfare! It became embarrassing to the extreme. We live as if neither the Russian nor the Red Army has and never had any experience of waging a guerrilla war! As if the essay had not appeared at the beginning of the last century, where for the first time



the features of guerrilla warfare, its goals, tactics and methods of interaction with regular troops were formulated! And besides, written by Denis Davydov! At one time, I memorized the famous lines and stunned listeners with them: "Guerrilla warfare consists neither in very fractional nor in paramount enterprises, for it is not about burning one or two barns, not disrupting pickets and not inflicting direct blows on the main forces of the enemy. It embraces and crosses the entire length of the paths, from the rear of the opposing army to that expanse of earth that is determined to supply her with troops, food and charges, through which, blocking the flow of the source of her strength and existence, she exposes her to the blows of her army exhausted, hungry and deprived of saving bonds What about the work of Major General Golitsyn, written back in 1859, "On partisan operations on a large scale, brought into the correct system and applied to the actions of armies in general, and our Russians in particular"? organization, tactics and operational use of partisan forces, published at the end of the last century by General Klembovsky? At the beginning of the civil war, Klembovsky's book interested Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and was published in 1919 at his direction as a manual for Red Army units and red partisans. It was then that Lenin pointed out that partisan actions are not revenge, but military operations! What should I say! Faithful to Lenin's instructions, Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze and other Soviet commanders did a lot to study the objective laws of partisan actions and to prepare for a partisan war in the event of an attack on the USSR by any aggressor. Active participation in this training from 1925 to 1936 and the then People's Commissar of Defense K. E. Voroshilov. During the period of repression against the military, they stopped in advance. partisan bases were liquidated, a large number of mine explosives were removed from secret warehouses and transferred to the army, and several tens of thousands of foreign rifles, carbines, and foreign machine guns and millions of cartridges for in these warehouses. destroyed All them were simply The worst thing was that in 1937-1938 they were repressed well

trained partisan cadres, who were shot, who were exiled, and survived from the "partisans" only those who accidentally changed their place of residence or, fortunately, ended up in distant Spain, took part in the battle with fascism. The very idea of the possibility of us conducting a guerrilla war was buried. The new military doctrine ruled out a long-term strategic defense for the Red Army, ordering to respond to the enemy's blow with a more powerful one in the shortest possible time, to transfer military operations to the territory of the aggressor. Naturally, in the regular troops, neither the command, nor even the rank and file, no longer received knowledge that would enable them to confidently operate behind enemy lines. But now, when we are forced to retreat, when in the rear of the Nazis there remains a territory inhabited by Soviet people, a territory with units that have been surrounded, a territory cut up by a dense network of railways, now is the time to correct the mistake! Partisan detachments will arise, there is no doubt about it. Encircled units, individual fighters and commanders who have not made their way to their own, will also go over to partisan actions or join partisan detachments. This means that they need help so that the excess blood of the Soviet people does not shed, so that the partisans do not suffer unnecessary losses, so that they know how to fight, and have everything necessary for the war behind enemy lines! Experience suggested that partisan detachments emerging behind the front line should be sent with specially trained organizers, modern equipment to disrupt the operation of the enemy rear, and radio communications. To train such organizers, to form detachments and groups of partisans sent behind enemy lines, to supply these detachments and groups with everything necessary should be in special schools, similar to those that existed in the thirties. And in the workshops at schools to make mines, even the simplest, but easily installed on the roads behind enemy lines, especially on Zhelezny. The fascist command is vainly counting on a blitzkrieg. There will be no lightning war, our resistance is growing, sooner or later we will strike back, the course of events will change, the hostilities will continue for some time, and here the enemy will need not only tanks and trucks, but also railways, railway transport ! Only by rail will the enemy be able to carry out

the main transportation of their troops, military equipment, ammunition and fuel! And we are obliged to deprive the occupiers of such an opportunity ... The first meeting with Mekhlis Without waiting for Voroshilov's call, I, on my own initiative, once went to the headquarters of the Western Front to talk with the marshal about partisan affairs. Alas, Voroshilov had left for Moscow by that time. Frustrated, I went to General Vasiliev. Pyotr Mikhailovich sympathized, agreed what to violate. the work of enemy railway transport is necessary, he advised me to go to the representative of the Stavka, army commissar of the 1st rank, Z. L. Mekhlis, who was at the headquarters of the front. "I'm sure he's

aware of the matter and, of course, will help!" Vasilyev reasoned. Mekhlis received me. I explained how important, continuously growing importance is the mining of railways in the rear of the fascist troops, I tried to convince the army commissar that sabotage on enemy communications would require much less manpower and resources than was spent on bombarding railway junctions and military echelons, that the enemy would not have enough strength for the reliable protection of even the most necessary railways and roads, he tried to develop the idea of \u200b\u200bguerrilla warfare.

"Wait, Colonel! interrupted Mekhlis. - What brings you to me? Is anyone bothering you? - No ... - Then what are

we talking about? Help the partisans to health and do not take my time! You are free. "N-nda," said

Vasiliev, having learned about the results of my visit to Mekhlis. "That means the army commissar has other urgent business to attend to. Why don't you pay a visit to Comrade Ponomarenko, a member of the Front's Military Council? Indeed! Panteleimon Kondratievich is the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party of Belarus, he is probably engaged in partisans along the party line. General Vasiliev's idea was encouraging! But is it worth it to go to a member of the Military Council empty-handed? Wouldn't it be better to show samples of mines that can be easily made anywhere and in any conditions, since the details for them are lying underfoot in the full sense of the word? Meeting with Ponomarenko. Head of the OTC In a day, I made two such samples and "wrapping the souvenirs in an old newspaper, in the second

noon on July 11 came to Ponomarenko. He was the first to demonstrate an anti-train mine of his own design (PMS). Explained its device and installation method. Ponomarenko held the mine, tested the action of the contactors with a light bulb from a flashlight instead of a detonator:

- It works! But perhaps difficult. Wow how much did you wind up fuses!

- With such a device, comrade member of the Military Council, the mine is absolutely safe to install and cannot be removed by the enemy ... Ponomarenko silently put the PMS aside, pointed with his eyes at the second sample. I talked about the second, started talking about other mines that can be made from improvised materials, about homemade hand grenades and incendiary shells.

- Not bad, but you have only samples and stories, and there are a lot of them. you won't win. I objected:

- Comrade member of the Military Council, if there are samples, you can set up the production of mines right at the front! If only people knew what

to do! - You can not agitate me! Ponomarenko answered. - I am for. Allocate knowledgeable commanders and as many fuses as possible, and let's supply the partisans! "I

don't have specialist commanders, comrade member of the Military Council. And mine-explosive means to spare. But before, in the thirties, there were special partisan schools. — Schools? - Yes sir. There

they taught the tactics of guerrilla actions, showed how to make all kinds of mines and use them behind enemy lines. Maybe organize such a school now? Ponomarenko pondered, touching the samples of mines with his fingers, raised his narrowed eyes: - This is an idea - to create a school! .. However,

it would be better to call it something else, so as not to catch the eye ... Let's say, a training center. Yes. Exactly! Training center!.. I will ask you to urgently prepare a memorandum addressed to the People's Commissar of Defense and a draft of the corresponding order. It is not difficult to put down on paper what has haunted you for years. The next morning, I handed Ponomarenko a memorandum addressed to the People's Commissar of Defense and a draft

NPO order to organize a special training center for the Western Front. Panteleimon Kondratievich read both documents, made corrections to the text, the papers were reprinted, and the next day they were signed by Marshal Timoshenko, who, remaining People's Commissar of Defense, took command of the Western Front. The partisan school being created was named the Operational Training Center of the Western Front, abbreviated as the OTC. I was assigned to him chief.

- Act! Ponomarenko said when I signed the order I had read. — Go to Roslavl. There is a point for the formation of partisan detachments of the front, and there you will quickly place a training center. I wish you success! I realized that I was at the origins of a great cause, and I rejoiced. A dream came true - to strike at the stretched, poorly guarded communications of the enemy armies, to cut the creeping fascist viper in two, to separate its head - advanced units, from the tail - sources of supply.

## Chapter 4

At about six o'clock in the morning on July 14, five kilometers from Roslavl, among the swamps and scraggly black forests, Semenikhin and Schleger, I, and I found the buildings of the peat extraction department: there, according to our information, employees of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus were stationed, from whom we could find out where point of formation of partisan detachments. Puzzled by our arrival, the duty officer stubbornly repeated one thing:

- Everybody sleeps. Through the open doors of the rooms, I myself saw that right on the floor, side by side, people were sleeping. But the matter brooked no delay, and we insisted that the duty officer seek out and wake up Comrade Eidinov, Secretary of the Central Committee. The attendant took me to the rooms. Eidinov slept on a short Viennese sofa, bending his knees. He sat down, vigorously rubbed his face, took the letter from P.K. Ponomarenko, read it, rubbed his face again firmly:

— Sorry, we finished work very late yesterday. We left for Roslavl: the point of formation of partisan detachments was in a pioneer camp on the outskirts of the city. Eidinov on the way brought up to date: there are no specialists in partisan tactics and equipment at the point, there is no equipment either, but detachments are being formed, people are assigned specific tasks - to destroy fascist soldiers and officers, destroy various military facilities and railways, interfere with communications. - And how to do it - teach? Eidinov

shrugged his shoulders: "Well! They figure it out! Pharmacy affairs In the former pioneer camp, I met the head of the station, Ivan Petrovich Kuteinikov, in the past head of the military department of the Council of People's Commissars of the BSSR. Ivan Petrovich frankly admitted that he had no clear idea either about the guerrilla war as a whole, or about the tactics of guerrilla operations, or about the technique and tactics of sabotage work. - Judge for yourself - how do I know all this? he spread his hands. - I never aimed at the partisans. Now, if about uniforms or products, in general, in terms of supplies - yes, I can do it.

"There is trouble with weapons," Kuteinikov added to the picture at breakfast. "There aren't enough rifles, no machine guns, you can't even get hand grenades... And you say explosives and so on!" There is not a single living soul here who even knows a little about this most subversive business! We got used to one thing: to restore training rifles. We solder the drilled holes, and nothing - shoot! "So you don't supply partisans

with mines?" - What the hell are mines?

Thank God, they learned how to solder holes! - Badly. Mines, by the way,

can even replace artillery for partisans. Judge for yourself, Ivan Petrovich ... - I launched into explaining the advantages of engineering mines, and at the end of my passionate speech, Kuteinikov even put down his fork. - Do you have these mines with

you? Well, show me! Samples of mines, incendiary shells, hand grenades - all this was a revelation for Ivan Petrovich, - Such a little thing can ruin a whole train ?! Force! Acquaintance with the future partisans took place immediately after breakfast. I saw dozens of attentive, watchful eyes, saw faces marked with fatigue, anxiety, and care. It was clear to me what was going on in the souls of these "people, who selflessly volunteered to go behind enemy lines, concerned about the lack of weapons and means of communication. Without wasting time on general conversations, I began directly by showing the brought equipment. And alert eyes shone, worried faces lit up people didn't leave for a long time, everyone wanted to see the mines and grenades closer, touch them. that there is no documentation for the manufacture of engineering mines, or the mines themselves, or other sabotage means at the front yet? But is it necessary, however, to explain this, to darken people's lives? Isn't it better to find some solution to the problem? There was only one solution: immediately to go to Moscow, to the Main Military Engineering Directorate: they can only help there." And in the afternoon of the same day, Schleger's pickup rushed to Moscow. Looked strange

city. If not for the reddish tint of sunset sunlight, one would think that the day in Moscow is just beginning: there are too few people on the streets. I found my boss, Colonel Nagorny, in his office. - It's good that you came! Your group has completed the task, the troops have received

replenishment, now you will work in the department! I read a certified copy of the order of the people's commissar of defense appointing me head of the operational training center, frowning. He returned the order: "Are you going to sit on two chairs?" It won't work. However, after listening to me, he agreed that it was necessary to

help the training of partisans in every possible way. With the help of Nagorny and Galitsky, we quickly received outfits for supplies for the manufacture of mines, grenades and incendiary shells, but it was not possible to obtain funds

radio

communications. Why don't you ask where the family is? Nagorny chuckled when I once again went into his office with some kind of demand. - And what? I

hope they are at home. - At home,  
at home, but where is this house, you know? I'm confused.

"Say thanks to Vakulovsky and Tsabulov," advised Nagorny, naming my comrades in the department. "While some are partisans, they evacuate their wives and children. In the very forest town where you commanded the training ground after Spain ... Having loaded the pickup truck with the extracted property, in the late morning of the next day we moved back to Roslavl. And there he stunned Kuteinikov: an order was received on the night of July 16 to send to the enemy

rear one hundred people.

- With what to send, did not say? -

You are ordered to think! Feverishly guessing what is possible to do, I touched the deputy on the shoulder:

- Is the pharmacy far away?

Works? — Pharmacy in the city. Works. Are you unwell, Comrade Colonel? Kuteinikov was alarmed. - It will not

be good if the pharmacy fails. Go! The pharmacist, not seeing the prescription in my hands, raised his eyebrows expectantly. I presented



identity card and - explained - that it is required The pharmacist had a sense of humor:

- Do you guarantee that the patient will have a hard time? - I guarantee it. "Then

I'll prepare a "medicine" in any quantity!" Leaving the pharmacist and his assistants to fulfill our huge order, I returned to the pioneer camp and immediately began training with the partisans. I visited with them in the field, on the road and on the railway. He showed how to lay mines in various conditions, introduced listeners to other ways of destroying enemy communications. Using chemicals stuck in a pharmacy, they managed to make a number of homemade grenades, grating igniters and explosive mixtures. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Semenikhin, having received information that a lot of ammonium nitrate remained in one of the nearest state farms, brought three tons of this fertilizer to the pioneer camp. It served as raw material for homemade explosives. Thus, the leaving group was provided with grenades, igniters and explosives. Now the task was to protect the grating igniters and homemade ammonal from dampening while the group was moving behind enemy lines. But a way out was found even here, although our new demand threw the pharmacist of the Roslavl pharmacy into confusion (It seems that Ilya Grigorievich requisitioned all the "products No. 2" of the Bzk rubber plant. Principal ed. A.E.) once. Preparation of the first instructors At dawn on July 17, I received an order to relocate the operational training center to Chonki, near Gomel: the day before, the enemy captured Smolensk, and the situation worsened. The permanent staff of the OUC and the workers of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus traveled to Chonkiv via Mglin. Clogged with refugees and lowing cattle, the streets of Mglin reminded me of Valencia in 1936. From Mglin, without stopping, we turned towards Unecha, making a stop only in Klintsy. The evacuation was in full swing. Arriving in Gomel, we settled in the so-called "obkom dachas". The place turned out to be better not to think of: forests and a railway nearby. Classes began immediately, as soon as the cars were unloaded, property and people were placed. Only 60 hours were allotted for the preparation of the partisan group, fifteen times less than it used to be, at the beginning

thirties. But nothing can be done - the war, the situation is extremely difficult ... We started with the training of instructors. Time did not allow training instructors for station wagons - they began to deal with instructors in sabotage equipment. The first group included Lieutenant G. V. Semenikhin, K. S. Mikheeva, F. P. Ilyushenkov and several other comrades. Semenikhin is a man of difficult fate. The son of the commander of a cavalry regiment, an associate of M.V. Frunze, he remained an orphan for nine years. Together with his sister he lived and studied in an orphanage in Leningrad. Since 1930, he began to work as a mechanic at the factory. He wanted to become an engineer and stubbornly pursued his dream: on the job he entered the Leningrad Institute of Mechanical Engineers of Socialist Agriculture and, combining study with work, successfully defended his thesis in 1937. Immediately after the institute, Semenikhin was called to serve in the railway troops of the Red Army. He graduated from the so-called "one-year courses" and was left in the regular troops. Already on the Karelian Isthmus in the winter of 1939/40, I appreciated the courageous, enterprising and rather cautious commander, and getting to know Semenikhin better, I realized that this strong-willed person could become a good teacher of future partisans. And I wasn't wrong. In the operational training center, Semenikhin perfectly mastered the new sabotage technique for him, studied the tactics of guerrilla warfare, and began to independently train people. A year later, he became deputy head, and then head of the partisan school at the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, created in 1942. Klavdiya Semyonovna Mikheeva, a young, blue-eyed Klavochka, as her friends affectionately called her, the OEC workers met in Gomel. Mikheeva worked at a match factory, she became interested in partisan incendiaries, she helped us in many ways. Taking a closer look at the hard-working, fighting girl, I suggested that she go to the workshop of the training center. Klavochka blushed and ... flatly refused. It even felt a bit embarrassing! "I beg you, Comrade Colonel, do not talk to me in front of witnesses," Mikheeva said quickly, without raising her eyes. "And there is no need for people to know about my cooperation with your subordinates.

Is there a good reason for such a request?

- Yes. Good reasons must be respected. I guessed something and talked about Mikheeva in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus. As expected, they intended to leave her in underground work in Gomel. It was possible to prove that it would no longer be possible to hide the fact of Klavdiya Semyonovna's cooperation with the operational training center, that it was risky to leave her underground now, and Mikheeva was transferred to the disposal of the OTC. And Klavochka, after only ten days of work at the training center, announced her desire to go behind enemy lines. She, they say, has already trained many girls and boys to make incendiary shells and fuses instead of matches, she really wants to beat the enemy herself. I announced that I would not let her go anywhere until I learned all the intricacies of the case, and I kept my word. Following a group of instructors in sabotage technology, instructors in guerrilla tactics began to be trained. In drafting the order for the creation of a training center, I provided for the dispatch to the center of at least twenty-five border guard commanders. Experience suggested that they would become the most valuable employees: by the nature of their service, border guard commanders are well acquainted with many of the techniques and methods of fighting the enemy used by partisans. The border guards were sent to the CTC, and they justified our expectations. F. P. Ilyushenko, P. A. Romanyuk, T. P. Chepak, I. S. Kazantsev, F. A. Kuznetsov, and all the other comrades of the "first draft" turned out to be good operational workers and became excellent teachers of tactics. About guerrilla strategy Time passed. The front was inexorably approaching Gomel, and it was no longer necessary to cherish days, but literally hours! Graduates of the school mastered the basics of partisan work firmly. They were constantly reminded: the Nazi army is completely dependent on the delivery of reinforcements, ammunition and weapons from the deep fascist rear, partisans can paralyze enemy transport with massive sabotage, leave enemy formations at the front without ammunition and fuel. Sabotage was recommended to be carried out as far as possible from the settlements, the inhabitants of which help the partisans. It was explained, by the way, that the mass nature of sabotage is the most reliable way to force the enemy to abandon cruel repressions against the civilian population. Part of the organizational and sabotage groups trained by us and part of the partisan detachments formed in areas threatened by the fascist

invasion, then left on the ground. Other detachments were transferred across the front line. Soon, the OTC set up a partisan school in Mozyr, sending a number of instructors there, headed by Chepak and Kazantsev. They also took instructors from us to other schools. Things seemed to be looking up! But there was much more to worry about. Lack of weapons. The complete absence of radio communications. Mistakes in training people. It turned out, for example, that the equipment of partisans and border guard guides under the "local residents" does not bring good. Playing the role of "locals", our mummery entered the settlements, hiding their weapons, and settled down for days without setting up reliable guards, and suffered losses. Then it was decided that all our people must wear military uniforms, and weapons should never be hidden unless absolutely necessary. Those who did not get uniforms were sewn kumachevy strips on their hats. The result came quickly. The appearance behind enemy lines of uniformed, well-armed detachments inspired the population, horrified traitors and traitors, unnerved the invaders, and disciplined the partisans themselves, forced them to be vigilant: for a day they either remained in the forest, or, having entered the village, organized combat support, not relying on "masquerade". People came and went to us. Wonderful people! Many could have gone to Siberia or Central Asia, to avoid the horrors of war, but they preferred to go behind enemy lines and perform dangerous tasks in order to bring the hour of victory closer by their own military labor and feat.

## Chapter 5

Shortly after being located near Gomel, the workshops of the operational training center began to experience a need for the parts necessary for the production of mines. Even the supply of batteries for flashlights, without which you can't make mines with electric detonators, has dried up. In Gomel, no parts, no batteries were found, a trip to Kyiv could solve the problem: the capital city, industrial, it is only two hundred kilometers away, some four hours by train. And as soon as the idea of a trip to Kyiv arose, the idea was immediately born to find partisan commanders and specialists in subversive work there, familiar from the beginning of the thirties. It can't be that everyone has left!.. The shortest road from Gomel to Kyiv lies through Chernigov. I ordered Schleger to go to the regional party committee: the situation is threatening, in the regional committee, of course, they are preparing to conduct a partisan war, they may experience difficulties - partisans were not trained in the Chernihiv region, it never occurred to anyone that the enemy would be beyond the Dnieper and Pripyat! Secretary of the Regional Committee Fyodorov Fifteen people were sitting in the reception room of the first secretary of the Chernigov regional party committee, Alexei Fedorovich Fyodorov. The assistant to the secretary of the regional committee took my mandate, went behind the high, brown-leather-

covered door, and literally a minute or two later flung it open: "Here you are,

by the way! Fedorov greeted me with unexpected affability. - Well, how impossible it is by the way! We are going to partisan, but there are no knowledgeable people! .. - You sit, sit, Comrade Colonel. I won't let you go so easily! Having returned the documents, Aleksey Fedorovich said that the people in the partisan detachments and groups were selected, armed with rifles, there were even grenades and machine guns, only they know about partisans

- Do not ask anyone what it is - partisans, they answer at once: well, well, Baklanov and Metelitsa, in a word, "Rout". It was given, you understand, to them this name is "Rout"! They, on the contrary, need to smash the fascist themselves! Aleksey Fyodorovich spoke, seemingly contritely, but slyly

my eyes were laughing, and I felt: the secretary of the regional committee was looking at me, evaluating me. A broad-shouldered man of about thirty-five

entered the office without a report. "Meet me," said Fedorov. — Colonel Starinov. And this is the secretary of our regional committee, Nikolai Nikitovich Popudrenko. Now he is in charge of the underground and the partisans. I heard that Popudrenko worked as a locksmith at the Dnepropetrovsk Metallurgical Plant, and I was surprised that his hand was white

and soft, but then I realized: he did it ten years ago! "Ilya Grigoryevich is going to help us with the organization of partisan affairs," Fedorov specified. - You, Nikolai Nikitovich, when can you gather groups for briefing? - Tomorrow.

Right in the morning. I protested: "Comrades, I urgently need to go to Kyiv.

You can't stop for an hour! "So what did you come for?" Hurt? - Fyodorov was surprised, - Why - to kiss? Help. I'll leave you a brief summary of lectures on disrupting the enemy's rear, and when I return to the training center, I will be able to send instructors.

- Well, show me the summary! Fedorov held out his hand. I took out a pile of fairly worn sheets from my briefcase and gave it to the secretary of the regional committee. Alexei Fyodorovich skimmed through the notes,

slapped the bale with his broad palm: Let's start with this. Will do. And you promise that you will come after

Kyiv. Agreed? - I will definitely come, Alexey Fyodorovich.

I got up. "I don't think it's bad for you and the driver to have lunch." Come into the dining room, I'll make arrangements," suggested

Fedorov. — Is it convenient? - It will be inconvenient in the forests and swamps! On this they parted, and in the evening, in front of the windshield of Schleger's passenger car, the domes of St. Sophia flashed with reddish sunset gold, molten copper, the Dnieper strip sparkled with blue steel, Kiev gardens and parks swirled with spots of dark and light greenery. Fifteen minutes later we entered the city. But on the streets where I once wandered with a girl dear to my heart and friends, trenches were dug, hastily welded anti-tank hedgehogs bristled at the cherished crossroads, a

on the windows of the houses, crossing out the past, paper strips turned white - protection from blast waves ... We stopped on Khreshchatyk near house number 25. Before, a fighter of the Kotovsky brigade, holder of two orders of the Red Banner of War Nikolai Vasilyevich Plum lived here. In the thirties he was trained for the post of brigade commander. Is he here? The door was opened by an unfamiliar woman: - Nikolai Vasilyevich? So he

left last year with his family in Moldova. - Do you know the address? - Mabud, wines in Balti, and

maybe, where else ...

The weak flame of hope has died out. Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine There is not a soul on the square in front of the building of the Central Committee of the Party of Ukraine. The sun has set, twilight has crept in, perhaps because of this, the vague rumble of cannonade is heard more clearly from the west. In the pass department, they find out who I want to go to, contact the head of the military department of the Central Committee, Pyotr Ivanovich Zakharov, carefully study the documents, and, finally, issue a pass. The corridors of the building, covered with carpets, are deserted. Zakharov carefully listens to the request: to allocate to the operational training center ten thousand ampoules of sulfuric acid, two thousand batteries and bulbs for flashlights, and something else, and to find commanders and mine-explosive equipment specialists known to me from previous joint work. - For our part, we could assist in the preparation

partisan, I say in the end. Pyotr Ivanovich rubs the bridge of his nose.

"It's important," he concludes. - A very important matter. Let's go to Comrade Burmistenko. Now I'll call ... The secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Mikhail Alekseevich Burmistenko, has a gray complexion, dark, swollen bags under his eyes, but his gaze is intent, tenacious. "The old partisan bases

are long gone," Burmistenko says after listening to me. But the people were supposed to stay. Remember who you can, yourself, and we will look. Batteries and everything else, of course, we will give! - Comrade Starinov brought samples of sabotage equipment, -

Zakharov enters the

conversation. - Where are they? Burmistenko perks up. - Downstairs in the car.

— Aha! Well, I hope you won't organize sabotage in the Central Committee and can you bring your "toys" here? I hesitate to answer. We did not plant explosives in "toys", if we mean mines and grenades by such, but there were electric fuses in mines, and incendiary shells were generally real. "Perhaps it would be better to organize a display in

another place?" I asked, explaining the reason for the doubts. "Besides, there could be a misunderstanding with the guards." "What do you keep your household in?" interrupted

Burmistenko. "In two suitcases. "Bring it. : employees of the apparatus of the Central

Committee, several secretaries of regional committees. Decanters and ashtrays were removed from the conference table.

- Spread the good! Mikhail Alekseevich pointed to the table and chuckled:

- This, apparently, is the first time that such things have been brought into the building of the Central Committee. I showed how partisan mines work, I even demonstrated the effect of incendiary shells by placing them as a precaution in massive stone urns brought from the corridor. "Impressive!" said

Burmistenko. a request to send you here for at least five days. After all, we also created a partisan school, but we cannot boast of experience. The next day I came to the Central Committee again, this time with a list of former partisan commanders and mine-explosive specialists, whose names and surnames managed to remember

at night.

"We will start looking for people immediately," Burmistenko assured. — Was your request for details satisfied?

Yes, Mikhail Alekseevich. Thanks a lot, helped out! "They say debt pays red. Don't forget, we are waiting for you... Ponomarenko was pleased with the results of his trip to Kyiv, accepted Burmistenko's request to send me to Kyiv, and two days later I set off again. This time, four instructors got into a pickup truck, and among them a twenty-three-year-old border guard commander



F. P. Ilyushenko, chosen by me as an assistant. Ilyushenko was brown-eyed, a bit dry in body, fit, quick in movement. He had a remarkable memory and memorized everything new firmly and reliably. Silver threads shone in the thick chestnut hair of the young commander - a memory of the first days and nights of the war: he served in the Lithuanian border town of Mariampol, took a sip of dashing in full measure, saw both cowardice and confusion, but he also saw the unbending courage of soldiers and commanders, and he himself showed great courage in the bitter weeks of retreat to the east. I have already made sure that I can rely on Ilyushenko completely. I remember exactly the date of my second visit to Kyiv - August 1: on this day the Central Committee of the Party of Ukraine held a meeting of the command of two Kyiv, Donetsk and Kharkov partisan detachments. We got to the meeting straight from the road. It was an anxious day! Artillery cannonade approached, explosions of aerial bombs were heard in different parts of the city, fighter engines were tearing up in the blue heights, the dry, abrupt crack of aircraft machine guns and cannons was heard. At the request of the Ukrainian comrades, we hastily set up an exhibition of sabotage weapons in the foyer, in front of the conference room. Members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, employees of the apparatus of the Central Committee, partisan commanders and commissars A. F. Fedorov, V. T. Volkov, I. F. Borovik and others examined the "exhibits" with curiosity, turning them in their hands. Here, in the foyer, I also met Leonid Petrovich Drozhzhin, deputy head of the personnel department of the Central Committee, a lively, energetic, friendly person. Even before the beginning of the meeting, I learned from Zakharov that a place had been chosen for the partisan school in Pushcha Voditsa and that in the future it was Drozhzhin who should be contacted on questions of partisan personnel and sup

We'll get whatever you ask! Leonid Petrovich promised when meeting.

"I'm afraid even you can't get one substance!" I joked. — What?

— Time,

Leonid Petrovich. - Yes.

What is not, is not. But we will try! The report was made by Burmistenko. Burmistenko was supported by other comrades. This was the first meeting in my memory where issues of partisan tactics were discussed in a comprehensive manner, and combat experience was discussed.

civil war, I recalled the training of partisan personnel in the thirties. They also discussed the operations carried out by the detachments that began to operate behind enemy lines ... In the evening I went with my instructors to Pushcha Voditsa. Classes in the partisan school began the next day. In the workshops, they were trained to make partisan equipment, and in the field, on railways and roads, they were taught to lay mines. And so for twelve hours a day. It helped that I knew the town and surroundings well: I didn't have to rack my brains over where it was better to set up ambushes, which route to choose for a night crossing. And the students easily grasped and assimilated the material: after all, among them there were many young people with secondary and even higher education. By August 6, the partisan school in Pushcha Voditsa was in full swing. Not everything went smoothly during the course. One chepe happened to Schleger. He regularly attended our classes, looked closely, listened, and in Pushcha Voditsa, realizing how few instructors we had, he asked to entrust him with classes with one group. Volodya Shleger taught people well, but once he was too smart with ampoules and burned his boots with sulfuric acid. Good thing he didn't hurt his legs. Unfortunately, nothing but old boots with windings was obtained for Schleger. Meanwhile, the trip has expired. It was time to say goodbye to Pushcha Voditsa and Kiev. Before leaving, Mikhail Alekseevich Burmistenko received me. The conversation was serious, concerning mainly the issues of underground activities and the work of partisans in the cities. At the same time, Mikhail Alekseevich said that so far, unfortunately, I could not find any of the partisan commanders on my list. Thanking for the help in the work, Burmistenko with - anxiety

inquired:

- It's true, "that your driver is also a demolition worker - and has already managed to blow up his own boots? I was confused, I started to explain ...

Burmistenko burst out laughing:

- Well, okay! Just kidding! He bent down, pulled out new chrome boots from under the table: -

Thank your Volodya and give him the gift. Otherwise, he will be told that he was undressed in Kiev!" "How did you find out about this story?" I was surprised, "And this is a military secret!

Leonid Petrovich Drozhzhin offered to take care of Schleger. On the way to Gomel, fulfilling a long-standing promise, we turned into the Chernigrevsky regional party committee. -

Finally! Fedorov exclaimed. People are tired of waiting! He took out a little book from the desk drawer: - Do you like it?

Guilty, what is  
it? - Don't you know?

Your notes, only in divine form given! We embossed them here in a small print run.

- Left to my lot? - Left, do not

worry! Chernihiv Regional Committee, said

Fedorov, has already organized the training of partisans and demolition workers.

- Do you have anything new? Don't be stingy, share! he asked. "New" were slow-

acting incendiary shells, I posted a dozen of such shells on

table.

- Wait, I'll gather my comrades! Fedorov asked. Six or seven people gathered, including Popudrenko. Demonstrating delayed incendiary projectiles, I ignited them in various ways. The shells flared up at irregular intervals, burning violently. He began to explain the device of the shells. Aleksei Fedorovich took one of the balloons "as a memento", and take that one. and ignite! "Nothing," Fedorov reassured me and other comrades. "It's my own fault. But everyone

bachili, like these damned lighters are burning! Well, saboteurs, well, chemists! .. School of firefighters. As soon as we returned to the OUC, the employees of the regional committees and district committees of Belarus arrived there, left to work in the rear of the Nazi troops. The enemy approached Gomel, there was barely enough time for training newcomers to show partisan equipment and its operation, to give a lecture on the principles of organizing the underground. And in mid-August, P.K. Ponomarenko announced that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus had decided to relocate the operational training center to the Oryol region. Ponomarenko asked to urgently leave for Orel. Handing over a letter to Comrade V.I.

organize the training of partisans in the Oryol region. The conversation took place under the avalanche of close-by bombing and sharp, abrupt shots of anti-aircraft guns. Literally two or three hours later, with a small group of border guards from the OTC, we set off on a new road. The next day, "we got to Bryansk, spent the night in a hotel empty due to continuous bombing, and in the morning we hurried on. I had not been in Orel for six years. Pipes and workshops of new factories, new houses, streets, but most of the pipes were not smoked, and the streets turned out to be sparsely populated here too: Orel was also evacuated. In the regional party committee, the idea of creating a partisan school was supported. V. I. Boytsov immediately agreed with the command of the military district on the food supply for future partisans, and so that the school would not suffer due to lack of personnel, money and clothing supplies, at the headquarters of the military district it was formed as a unit of the Operational and Training Center of the Western Front. The place for the school was found ten kilometers from the city, not far from the airfield, where there was nothing for unauthorized persons to do. First, the regional committee sent twenty-six people to the school for training for instructors, and fully staffed it by August 18. For the purpose of secrecy, the school began to be called the "school of firefighters. " The calm, judicious party worker I.N. Larichev was appointed its head, the communist D.P. headquarters also of a communist, a purely civilian man, but downright created for staff work - M. V. Evseev. In the creation of the school and the training of partisan personnel, the regional party committee was constantly assisted by operational workers from the Oryol region - G. Bryantsev, who became a popular youth writer in the post-war years, M. M. Martynov, V. A. Cherkasov and their comrades. The head of the regional department of the NKVD KF Firsanov did a lot for the school. Among the future instructors sent by the regional committee there were party and Soviet workers, employees of the NKVD, agronomists, teachers, even one head - "" a bakery! The "girls' team" was very friendly - six female instructors, from among whom came the famous partisan Olga Kre-tova, who fought on the Southern Front, and Maria Belova, who taught hundreds of people during the war years sabotage techniques and methods of partisan struggle against the enemy. In September, they arrived at the "school of firefighters"

groups from Kursk and Tula, sent for study by the regional party committees there. Again, my assistant F. I. Ilyushenko showed himself very well in those days. He had the opportunity to train the detachment of the secretary of the Bryansk City Party Committee D. M. Kravtsov, who later became famous. Kravtsov himself, then young, energetic, enterprising, helped to establish mass production of engineering mines and grenades in Bryansk. In addition to Kravtsov, the future illustrious partisan commanders M.P. Romashin, A.D. Bondarenko and the Hero of the Soviet Union, General M.I. Duka, were trained at the "school of firefighters". I myself stayed under Orel for only a few days: an order came from Moscow to urgently return to the Main Military Engineering Directorate.

## Chapter 6. "Operation Alberich. Remember?"

Colonel Nagorny threw up his hands: - Look, Denis Davydov has come! Well, have you set up partisan affairs? "Am I the only one who fixes them?" -

Wonderful! Now these things will go on without you at all. You need in the department. Summer was over, and the tan hadn't even touched Nagorny's face.

What, doesn't look like a groom? Mikhail Alexandrovich chuckled. - I know. Hard time, Ilya Grigoryevich... You will be engaged in barriers near Moscow. - Near Moscow? - Yes. No accidents can be allowed ... By the way, let's go, I'll introduce you to the

new head of the department: General Kotlyar has taken office. Major General Leonty Zakharovich Kotlyar repeated what Nagorny had already said. For several days I took part in the formation of new units, went to the defensive lines around the capital, even flew around them, figuring out where and how to strengthen the barriers, until I received a new order: to leave for the Western Front, to control the construction of defensive lines in the Vyazma region. I stayed near Vyazma for three days. On the fourth day they called to the headquarters of the front: - Immediately to Moscow! I didn't even have time to say goodbye to my fellow miners. And here is Moscow again, the familiar yellow walls of the second building of the People's Commissariat of Defense. Brushing off the dust from my boots, straightening my

crumpled tunic, I go up the cool flights of stairs into the habitually darkish corridor. How solid and unchanging everything is in this building! Major General Kotlyar is waiting:

- I'm glad you hurried! The challenge is connected with a change in the situation and some new plans ... Do you know the situation on the Southwestern Front? From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau, I knew that on the Southwestern Front the enemy was rushing towards Kyiv, our troops were fighting difficult, bloody battles, defending the shrines of the Russian land, the mother of Russian cities. Kotlyar forcefully ran his hand over the graying hedgehog

hair; - Kyiv left on September 19. The enemy threatens the Kharkov industrial region and the Donbass. Kyiv abandoned?! Kotlyar's voice sounded as if from behind a stone wall, what he heard did not fit in his mind: four armies were in a difficult situation; come out of the encirclement, fighting in separate detachments; the troops did not have time to gain a foothold on the new lines; heavy fighting on a three-hundred-kilometer section of the front ... I was brought back to reality by the words harshly uttered by the head of the department that the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command had decided to assist the troops of the South-Western Front in the defense of the Kharkov region with massive mine-explosive obstacles and that - in the event of an advance by the enemy - they would have to mine and destroy all objects of military importance in Kharkov. "All objects" - meant; the most important plants and factories, bridges, "a

locomotive depot, airfields ... - A special operational-engineering group is sent to Kharkov," said Kotlyar. He sank heavily into a chair, put his hand on the telephone receiver: "I'll report your arrival now, I'll make an agreement when they will be accepted at Headquarters. Marshal Shaposhnikov At the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, we were received late

at night by the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Marshal of the Soviet Union B. M. Shaposhnikov. I have not met the Marshal since 1936, from the day I left for Spain. Then he was smiling and cheerful, but now he looked gloomy. It was not difficult to understand Shaposhnikov's condition. The enemy was closing the blockade around Leningrad, to Odessa and Moscow, just captured Kiev, the fascist hordes flooded Belarus, the situation looked not only difficult, but threatening." Having outlined the situation that had developed on the Southwestern Front, the marshal looked into my eyes: "Do you remember Operation Alberich? Of course, I well remembered this operation: in March 1917, making a forced retreat from France behind the so-called "Siegfried Line",

the Kaiser troops carried out massive destruction and massive mining for five weeks on an area of about four thousand square meters.

kilometers. Military historians considered Operation Alberich the most significant in terms of mass destruction and mining.

"So," continued Shaposhnikov, without looking away, "destruction and mining in the Kharkov region will have to be done on a much larger area, and I can't guarantee five weeks for work. We must act quickly, Comrade Colonel. And he turned to General Kotlyar: - Have you prepared the application? "That's right, Comrade

Marshal!" - answered

Leonty Zakharovich. I gave Shaposhnikov the written sheets. Taking a pencil, the marshal deepened his reading. He shook his head: - With a margin, my dear, they did it! You know, with the

means and forces is not enough! The pencil scratched on the request. "We will approve it in such an abbreviated form," the marshal

said firmly and put his signature. It was not possible to consider Shaposhnikov's amendments: he got up, indicating that the audience

finished.

- Gather people, get what you need and immediately go to Kharkov! - admonished the marshal. Remember: no accidents. Mines must be safe for our troops. I dared notice:

"With such a scale and such a pace... The road to Kharkov The day of September 28, 1941 was remembered strongly. I had to rush around the city, but in one day I redid the affairs in the Main Military Engineering Directorate, and selected people for the new task force, received mine explosive equipment, and provided the group with transport. Fifteen commanders of the engineering troops, several instructors from the training center and a special unit of military engineer 2nd rank Vladimir Petrovich Yastrebov, who were armed with radiomines, went to Kharkov with me. True, only thirty pieces of radio miners were issued, less than three thousand fuses and slow-acting contactors, only five hundred pieces of contactors that respond to concussion, but it was possible to start with this. I only regretted that I did not have time to properly talk with the young commanders selected for the group, did not warn them about the special secrecy of the mission. But this would require a trip to the military engineering school, and there was no time left ...



The morning of the twenty-ninth of September forty-one began in Moscow gloomily, reluctantly. At night, a tedious, orphan rain fell, the dawn could not break through the low, swollen clouds, disperse the damp dusk. The curtained windows did not let in the light, they seemed blind. The boots of the patrols thudded dully, the figures of the tenants on duty for air defense stooped in the entrances, the cables of the barrage balloons stretched from the boulevards and embankments to the gloomy sky, a tank company moved along the Garden Ring with a clang. The convoy got out on the Kharkov highway, and in the afternoon safely arrived in Orel. Here we had to linger, refueling the cars, and halfway to Kursk we were caught by the night. Impenetrable, also rainy. You can't turn on the headlights, driving with darkened ones is dangerous. They started looking for a place to sleep. We chose a secluded hollow, decided to settle down, but there was no water nearby, and we had to move on. So they crawled at low speed to Kursk itself. But what a blessing that there was no water near the hollow: on the same night, the fascist troops cut the highway in the area where we almost spent the night! In Kursk, the convoy did not linger: the enemy bombed furiously, his artillery hit very close, we had no right to put people and equipment at risk. And on the first of October, around noon, clouds of smoke appeared in the steppe distance above the dark silhouette of the city. Kharkiv. Finally! General Nevsky The chief of the engineering department of the front, Major General Georgy Georgievich Nevsky, the author of voluminous works on fortification, who was widely known among military engineers, I still knew by hearsay. Nevsky listened to the report while standing and only then, having seated me, sank into a chair himself: "To

be honest, we were worried: the situation in the Oryol direction is very difficult ... Of course, you are interested in what forces and means the front can allocate to the operational group? I don't think I'll make you very happy. We can allocate only five battalions for the installation of explosive barriers and one company for the installation of electrical barriers. - But,

comrade general..., Nevsky raised his palm: -

Provided that your group will not only produce barriers on roads, airfields and other military facilities, but also mine defensive lines. I looked at the general's palm and

frantically pondering how to argue more convincingly. And Nevsky continued:

- I will ask Marshal Timoshenko to concentrate in your hands the leadership of all mine-explosive work. Here I am literally cried out:

- Comrade General! In our country, only the unit of military engineer Yastrebov has experience in constructing explosive barriers, and that is purely special - in mining large objects! Only one unit! Yes, and it has not yet arrived, and it is not known when it will arrive! Nevsky smiled slyly:

- But but but! After all, I said, it seems, from the very beginning: your God is happy! .. Calm down. Yastrebov's unit has arrived. His lieutenants are placed in the school of Colonel Kochegarov (***Colonel Maxim Konstantinovich Kochegarov - a participant in the war in Spain, one of the famous educators of partisans***). I rejoiced; - They jumped! And Yastrebov is here?!

"Yastrebov himself is not here, but his lieutenants have arrived... So, we have agreed, Colonel. I ask Marshal Timoshenko to concentrate the leadership of explosive work in your hands. From my remark about the arrival of the miners, it did not at all follow that we had agreed on something, but Georgy Georgievich knew how, when he wanted to, listen only to himself. - Agreed, agreed! he repeated. - Parallelism in such

work is unacceptable: mines will blow up their own troops. - He got up. - Rest, we will go to the Military Council of the front in the evening. Marshal Timoshenko this time

Marshal Timoshenko looked exactly the same as he was in the pre-war years. Before I had time to introduce myself, I heard the former, with confident intonations,

voice:

What are you teaching your officers? We had to stand at attention for three minutes, listening to the thunder, before it turned out that the young commanders had failed: in the office of the military commandant of the city, they reported that they had arrived at the disposal of Colonel Starinov, who would mine objects of military importance. Of course, the commander of the front was reported about the chatter of the youths, so he scolded me! I made no excuses: the marshal was right.

Depressed, I said nothing even when Nevsky proposed to concentrate the leadership of all mine-explosive work in my hands. I did not even dare to ask for an increase in the number of engineering units allocated by the front for a future operation: in Timoshenko's mood it was felt that now it would be better for me not to stutter about anything. They left the office of the front commander.

"Well, that's all the questions have been settled," said Nevsky. Is this called "decided"? — burst out of me. Nevsky looked up in surprise.

- E! Come on, Ilya Grigorievich! The marshal only scolded you, if you want to know. Don't worry, calmly proceed with the execution of the order. Khomniuk disappeared with radio mines! Working with General Nevsky on the plan for the barriers in the Kharkov area and on the application for materiel, I couldn't help but feel that some of the points in the plan were "hanging in the air." According to my calculations, military engineer 2nd rank V.P. Yastrebov and a convoy with radio mines and radio mine specialists should have arrived in Kharkov as early as the first of October. But the second passed, but they did not appear. By noon on October 3, the obstacle plan and the application for equipment were drafted. Yastrebov and his men were absent. At the third hour of the day, the plan and the application were finally specified. Neither Yastrebov nor his convoy. Vladimir Petrovich appeared only about eighteen o'clock. Tired, without the usual friendly smile on his face. — What happened, Vladimir Petrovich? Almost fell into the clutches of the Nazis. Barely got the column out of the way... Yastrebov left Moscow, as agreed, on September 30th. Before the Eagle, everything went smoothly. However, it was not easy to enter the city: a stream of retreating troops and population was breaking towards them, the enemy was continuously bombing. Yastrebov's convoy nevertheless made its way into the city, but because of the threat of encirclement, they had to immediately return to Mtsensk. From there, Vladimir Petrovich drove the cars to Kharkov in a roundabout way: through Yelets, Voronezh and Kupyansk. On roads clogged with troops, refugees, herds of cattle, we somehow pushed through to Voronezh. Here the highway became freer. Realizing how worried we were in Kharkov, how we were waiting for news, Yastrebov entrusted the column to Lieutenant Khomnyuk and Sergeant Sergeev, and he himself rushed forward.

- In a day the column will arrive! Yastrebov assured. "I will personally monitor her movement through the checkpoints. - Lieutenant Khomniuk, is he a

regular or one of the young? - cautiously, with a faint hope of a successful one; outcome I asked.; - Young! Yastrebov answered cheerfully. - Call Kupyansk immediately, comrade

military man. engineer of the second rank! Vladimir Petrovich called. He was told that the convoy in question had not arrived in the city. Yastrebov turned pale. On the night of October 4, the plan for mining Kharkov and the application for equipment were agreed. The plan provided for the use of radiomin. — Hear anything about Khomniuk? I asked before

go with the plan to General Nevsky.

"No..." answered Yastrebov, haggard. There was nothing to talk about. Major General Nevsky approved the plan. I had to show it to the front commander. I asked Nevsky to go with me. The plan presented to Marshal Timoshenko might have seemed audacious. The envisaged volume of mining was five times greater than the volume of mine-explosive work of the notorious Alberich operation. We expected to complete the work twice as fast. In other words, every day the sappers had to do ten times more than the German sappers did in France. Timoshenko studied the plan carefully and for a long time. Finally, he raised his eyes from the papers: - Didn't you swing too hard? We won't fly into the air ourselves? -

Precautions are provided, comrade marshal! - Can you do it all? "We are counting on the consciousness and patriotism of the people. -

Okay, go ahead. But coordinate

the plan with a member of the War Council. N. S.

Khrushchev, a member of the Military Council of the Front, reviewed the plan and supplemented it in some ways. In particular, he increased the figure indicating the number of cases for false mines. I remember I was struck by his self-control. Unlike other high-ranking officials, Khrushchev did not look gloomy and nervous during this difficult time, on the contrary, he kept himself cheerful, acted quickly and energetically. Returning from the headquarters of the front, the first thing I asked Yastrebov,

where is lieutenant Khomniuk. About the lieutenant there was neither a rumor nor a spirit. We lost traces of the column with radiomines and explosives.

## Chapter 7 Find the way out. Be on time.

The headquarters of the engineering task force was located in the building of the Institute of Chemical Technology, not far from the headquarters of the front. Having locked the plan and the application in a safe, I went to the Kharkov regional party committee, so that, without delaying things, to solve the issues of production of equipment and installation of mines at the enterprises of the city. This is exactly what the Military Council of the front advised to do. It was deep night. Cars crawled along the streets of the city. darkened headlights, the wheels of steam-horse carts rattled, military units moved, and 1 it was heard how, in the distance, on the railway tracks, the horns of couplers and steam locomotives echoed: reinforcements were brought to the front, to the 38th army defending the city, Major General V. V. Tsyganov and ammunition, the equipment of factories and institutes was sent to the rear, the families of workers, engineers and employees were evacuated. The block of the House of Projects and Gosprom was barely visible in the impenetrable darkness. The wide doors of the entrance I needed either opened, revealing a rectangle of bluish ghostly light, then slammed shut, merging with the surrounding darkness. In the reception room of the secretary of the Kharkov regional committee and the city committee of the party A. A. Epishev, despite the late hour, there are a lot of people. Some in raincoats, some in a coat with traces of fuel oil and clay, some in a padded jacket, some in army style, in overcoats. Having invited four people to the office at once, Epishev's assis

- Do not leave, you will be received immediately after these comrades.

We didn't have to wait long. Briefly explaining to the secretary of the regional committee the essence of the obstacle plan approved by the Military Council of the Front, I applied for drills for making mine holes, for bodies of delayed mines for surprise mines. - A

little earlier with such an application! .. But nothing. The order will be fulfilled," said Epishev. - And if anything - the Gorkom will help. Keep in touch with him. Trouble does not go alone. The disappearance of the column with radio mines was not enough - electrochemical fuses presented a surprise. The next day after arriving in Kharkov, the military technician

N. K. Leonov reported that he found in each box with worked ones: fuses withstood Electrochemical fuses ~~transportation~~ mechanisms. Not, it is almost hopeless to check their reliability in front-line conditions, in a hurry. But, alas, there was no way out. And I ordered to put a hundred pieces of fuses for testing with different deceleration periods. Let me down or not let me down? After all, even if we remake electrochemical fuses into contactors, they should not "throw out tricks." But the answer to the question of whether the fuses would fail could only be given by time ... The second concern was people. Where to get them? The sapper battalions allocated by the front will not be enough. Went to the Military Council. There it was recommended to merge with the railway brigades working in Kharkov. Good idea! The railroad workers have people, and we have experienced instructors and equipment, but in a number of cases the work will have to be done jointly. Of the commanders of the railway brigades, I knew only P. A. Kabanov, but the commanders of two other brigades - B. P. Pavlov and S. A. Stepanov - immediately responded to the proposal to join forces, seconded several people to the courses organized by our group, and later, with their help, energetically set about installing the most advanced slow-motion mines at that time. At the same time, units of the operational-engineering group began to mine roads and other military facilities with delayed-action mines in the immediate vicinity of the front line: this was required by the deteriorating situation. Now it was necessary to gain confidence that the miners would not lack "mines. On the morning of October 5, V.P. Yastrebov, military technician N.K. Leonov, Lieutenant M.P. Boltov and Sergeant V.I. Lyadov, lovingly nicknamed "Cornflower" by the fighters (the sergeant's name was Vasily, and his eyes were really cornflower blue), went to the enterprises of the city. I confess, they did not count on much. Kharkiv residents then made rifles, machine guns, and rockets for "Katyushas" under evacuation conditions. ", and air bombs, repaired aircraft and tanks, built armored trains. They had to work during brutal bombardments. Yes, and master some of our mines, set up mass production of hermetic hulls for them, release drills, locks

non-removability, some parts for electrochemical fuses were difficult. How surprised we were to learn that the designers of the Kharkov Electrochemical Locomotive surveying tools Plant, the Svet Shakhtera plant and the mine <sup>And</sup> plant, were already completing the development of projects for drills and mines, and the workers had begun to produce mine cases! I remember visiting Kharkov Electromechanical. The evacuation of equipment was in full swing. The workshops were empty, where the machines had recently stood - only concrete foundations. And the machines themselves have been dismantled, they are moved with the help of logs and rollers to a string of railway tracks. Only one stamping machine worked. Two middle-aged workers skillfully, quickly inserted blanks under the press, carefully stacked ready-made mine cases on carts standing nearby. Yastrebov, tapping his fingers on one of the hulls, regretted that they had not been made like this before the war. A shift has come to the workers. The young boy, intercepting the workpiece, said:

"Enough for you today, Uncle Mikola. Now Peter and I will push. The older workers stepped aside. - Well, Vasil, - said "Uncle Mikola"

to his partner, - let's

Let's refuel and get some rest. - Nikolai ...

Excuse me, what is your patronymic? I inquired. - Father's name was Egor.

- Nikolai Yegorovich, now

my comrades and I must visit the workshop where mines are mounted, but we will be free in about half an hour, we can take you home by car. The old worker carefully wiped his hands with a rag:

— Thank you... Just don't wait for us at home, military comrades. Sons at the front, women on the night shift ... Yes, it's more convenient for us to spend the night here. You never know! The bastard is bombing all the time! In the workshop where the mines were mounted, twelve people worked on the night shift. The day shift slept right there, who where. The master approached, limping. It turned out that a fragment from the Karelian Isthmus was sitting in the leg. They remembered the places where both fought.

"Don't worry," said the master. - We will issue products ahead of schedule. But how? We were told what to do. An air raid siren went off. Anti-aircraft guns clapped excitedly. In the workshop, no one even raised his head, did not interrupt work. Khomniuk



found! The visits to the factories were reassuring: it seemed that we would get everything we needed at the right time. But there was still no clarity about electrochemical fuses, and still nothing was heard about the missing convoy with radio mines. General Nevsky constantly asked the military commandant's office whether the column had appeared, but the same answer came to all the telegrams: "There was no information about the column you were interested in." The general's gaze became alienated ... For some reason, I remembered that I had not sent a parcel from Moscow to my wife and children, that for the fourth day I had not written a single line to them. But the hand did not rise to write. Good thing, things were up to the neck. Arriving late in the evening from the headquarters of the 38th Army, I was about to have dinner when the group on duty reported that some lieutenant was asking for me. A hamster or a homniuk... I threw aside my chair, ran down the stone stairs to the noisy vestibule of the Institute of Chemical Technology, where in a dirt-stained overcoat stood a thin, boyish lieutenant with a tarpaulin field bag on his side; Nearby in the same overcoat is a sergeant. The lieutenant stretched out, raised his hand to the pilot - Comrade Colonel, let me report: the special equipment is in order, the teams have no losses, they are ready for the combat mission! Both of them, Lieutenant Khomniuk and Sergeant Sergeev, his assistant, could hardly

stand on their feet from fatigue. - Thank you, comrades! - I said in a non-statutory way. - Well done! But how did you get there? Where were you? They got there because they understood: to procrastinate with. delivery of special equipment is not possible. They did not wait for the weather by the sea, but by hook or by crook they dragged the cars through the impassable mud to Kupyansk and fell on the military commandant. He loaded the assertive sappers into the wagons and attached them to the first echelon going to Kharkov. We left on time: the anti-aircraft guns thundered again, reflecting another air raid. Lieutenant Khomniuk did not have time to finish the story, when Vladimir Petrovich Yastrebov ran into the lobby. I am unable to describe the gamut of feelings reflected on his face, tormented by expectation. Mining Kharkov It seemed that now, when the entire task force was assembled, we could breathe more freely, feel more confident. It wasn't there! At first it turned out that, despite all the efforts of Kharkiv residents, we would not

and that instead of three hundred tons of explosives, we will get no more than a hundred. Then the military engineer Leonov reported that one of the electrochemical detonators put to the test had worked ahead of time. I had to urgently start designing and manufacturing reliable fuses with long deceleration periods: otherwise it would be impossible to put powerful mines on important objects in our own rear! At a meeting of the Military Council, we were reproached for sluggishness and unpreparedness. N. S. Khrushchev said that the troops must always have ready explosive barriers. I replied that I had been trying to achieve this for many years, but without success. - So, it was necessary to turn directly to

Comrade Stalin! - I tried, but the letter did not reach Comrade

Stalin, returned back to the GVIU to take action, - Prepare a report on the state of affairs with mine-explosive barriers, refer to the experience of mining in Kharkov, we will send a report to the State Defense Committee! General Nevsky and I prepared the required report and quickly submitted it to the Front's Military Council. Yes, and time did not allow to delay: from the evening report of the Sovinformburo for October 7, we learned that the Bryansk and Vyazma directions appeared on the fronts. In those days, signs of observation of the work of miners by enemy agents were also found. Measures were immediately taken to disorientate the enemy spies. First of all, they intensified mining with "dummy" mines: false mines reliably camouflage combat mines, confuse the enemy, force them to disperse their forces during mine clearance, dull the vigilance of foreign sappers and contribute to causing damage to them. But we showed the greatest caution, the greatest vigilance in those days when laying radio-controlled mines in the city and its immediate environs. Radio mine in Khrushchev's mansion Already on October 3 I received a new order: to install a radio mine in house number 17 on Dzerzhinsky Street. This house, a mansion built in the early thirties for Stanislav Vikentyevich Kossior, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, was later transferred to the kindergarten, and now, after the kindergarten was evacuated, it was occupied by some leaders of the party and government of the Ukrainian SSR. Since people lived and worked in the house, I limited myself to inspecting the mansion from the street and figured out how many explosives would be needed to complete it.

destruction. After the seventh, we installed radiomines in the building of the headquarters of the military district, on the Kholodnogorsk and Usovsky overpasses, and in some places else. In the daytime, sappers pretended to equip bunkers and shelters, and at night they brought explosives to objects in bags, bottles, cartridge boxes, laid them deep in the ground and installed complex radio devices, supplying them with fuses and circuit breakers that ensure an immediate explosion of charges when a mine is detected adversary. If I am not mistaken, on October 10, General Nevsky recalled the order to mine house N17 on Dzerzhinsky Street, and on October 12 they ordered to put a radio mine in the mansion, and the categorical order came from N. S. Khrushchev himself, who lived in this mansion. I tried to warn against hasty mining: radio mines are a novelty, the city is being bombed, from a close explosion, even from a strong shaking, irreparable things can happen ...

- Do you believe

in your technique? Khrushchev interrupted. — I believe.

- Follow orders! ...

Access to the house N17 to carry out the necessary work was given to six people: a military engineer of the 2nd rank Yastrebov, a military engineer of the 2nd rank Leonov, sergeants Lyadov, Lebedev, Sergeev and myself. The house was located in the center of the city, stood in the depths of the garden, among mighty oaks and lindens. Trees with lush foliage could reliably hide the sappers from prying eyes, even if the observer settled somewhere above the stone fence and high iron gates. On the evening of October 12, we entered this gate. The house stood on a high brick foundation, with a balcony running along the mezzanine. In the lower part of the building there are utility rooms and a small boiler room. Having cleared a part of the boiler room near the inner main wall of the house from coal, the miners opened the floor, began to dig a deep well, more than two meters deep. The extracted earth was carefully poured into bags. In the first bag - the first layer of soil, in the second - the second, in the third - the third. On each bag there was a serial number, so as not to be mistaken when filling the well, to preserve the previous alternation of layers of earth. This is done in case the fascist sappers try to look for a mine. Having pulled out a well, the miners alternately descended into it, gouging under the foundation of the in

main wall niche for radio equipment and a large explosive charge. It's hard, laborious work. Only by noon on October 14, boxes with tol were lowered into the well. A powerful charge was set: it was necessary to destroy all the invaders who would settle in the mansion, and at the same time to grab the external fascist guards of the building. And in order to discourage enemy sappers from searching for mines and clearing them, the radio mine was made unrecoverable. After that, the place of its installation was carefully disguised and traces of work were destroyed. It remained to "calm down" the enemy, to throw him a "formidable Soviet mine": we perfectly understood that, having not found any mine in such a beautiful mansion, the enemy would become alert and most likely would not settle in the house. We installed a mine-lure in the boiler room. In the corner, under a pile of coal, sacrificing precious explosives, they assembled a complex delayed-action mine, providing it with various additional devices for detonation. In fact, all these devices, quite serviceable, ingenious and seemingly extremely dangerous, completely ruled out the possibility of an explosion of the "baubles" due to the fact that the dry batteries were already unusable. Having finished with this matter, the miners restored the floor of the boiler room to its original state, and the ceiling was hollowed out, anointed with fresh cement and whitewashed. Having entered the boiler room to check in what condition we were leaving the premises, the guards of the mansion, of course, fixed their eyes on the ceiling: neither the walls, nor the floor, which concealed a 350-kilogram charge of tola, nor a pile of coal, where the "baubles" were hiding - nothing aroused suspicion. On that day, our troops left Vyazma, and the evening report of the Sovinformburo reported a threat to the Donbass, the appearance of the Kalinin and Tikhvin directions.

## Chapter 8

Artillery cannonade came close to Kharkov. At night, the sky over the western outskirts turned purple from shooting and fires: the enemy attacked fiercely. Just three weeks ago, it seemed that mining this marvelous city was unthinkable, unacceptable, and now, although Kharkov was already saturated with mines, I wanted to put more and more of them. Even fears that each mine could become fatal for one's own died out and receded: hatred for the enemy, bitterness took possession of the soul. In the last days before leaving the city, the sappers of the operational-engineering group worked tirelessly so that the enemy could not use the local enterprises for the manufacture of military products, and the Kharkov airfields as a base for their aircraft. Under the floors of workshops of factories and plants, several dozen powerful delayed-action mines were buried, and small mines were placed everywhere and in the most unusual places: in exhaust pipes, even in the chandeliers of offices. We could not completely destroy four Kharkov airfields: there were not enough explosives. They made a decision: to destroy part of the hangars, and to spend the explosives mainly on time-delayed mines. Who did all this? In addition to the already named commanders, sergeants and ordinary soldiers, I simply have to mention the caring foreman M. G. Golitsyn, sergeants I. E. Golts, N. N. Sergeev, I. M. Kuznetsov (the one who saved Vasily Lyadov in Budapest), the resilient fighter V. A. Alimov, the "healer of mines" M. S. Melamed, the lively and quick M. P. Danilov, the diligent S. N. Svistunov. I must say the kindest words about the commanders, foremen, sergeants, ordinary soldiers assigned to our group of sapper and engineer battalions, about the personnel of the railway brigades working together with our group. But I must especially say about another group of Kharkov miners, people of a special destiny ... In July 1940, I received a letter from Kharkov from the Spaniards, with whom I fought against Franco's bands and the German-Italian interventionists. Answering, he said that I would soon go on vacation, I would take

ticket through Kharkov, I want to see you. On a cool autumn day, on the platform of the Kharkov railway station, Domingo Ungria and his son rushed to Anna and me.

— Louise! Rodolphe! Olla! Ombre! We made a noise, as after leaving the rear in Villanueva de Cordoba, we hugged and clapped each other on the shoulders, and the passengers contemplated this scene in amazement.

“Are you only for fifteen minutes?” Domingo suddenly asked very quietly, and the surroundings became instantly quiet too. I saw the longing and greedy eyes of my friends, looked at my wife, read in her eyes what I wanted to read, rushed into the compartment and managed to pull out the suitcases before the train left. Then we spent a whole day in Kharkov ... Now, a year later, having arrived in Kharkov, I immediately sought out Domingo. There was no time for long conversations. While drinking black, strongly brewed coffee in Spanish, I learned that twenty-two people from our former partisans remained in Kharkov, they work at a tractor factory, they dream of getting into the Red Army.

“Help us, Rodolfo,” Domingo pleaded. “We are not registered with the military commissariats, and no one wants to talk to us. But you know that we know how to fight the Nazis! I knew this very well, and on the same evening I told General Nevsky about the meeting with the Spaniards, told him about the past of the soldiers of the Spanish Republican Army. About Domingo himself - a former cavalryman, commander of the XIV partisan corps, swarthy, black-haired, resembling an Uzbek, extremely mobile, expansive, and in moments of danger - absolutely calm and cold-blooded. About the thirty-two-year-old handsome Juan, who owned a tiny garage before the fascist rebellion, gave all three of his cars to the republic, famously drove our trucks to the rear of the fascist troops near Teruel and blew up enemy trains near Cordoba. About the former Madrid pilots Benito Ustarros and Manuel Herrera, who fought in the sky over the Spanish capital with two or three fascist fighters on each flight. About the Barcelona pilots Cano and Esmeraldo who are not inferior to them in courage. About the twenty-two-year-old commander of the sabotage group Ippolito Noguesa, a master of capturing single enemy vehicles and daring raids in captured vehicles across enemy territory. About the handsome Chico Mariano, about the restrained Francisco Gaspar from Barcelona, about the commander of the Republican division Manuel Belda, about the daredevil

Francisco Guglione, about Rafael, Jose, Luis, Angel Alberca - about all his friends from the glorious and bitter days of fighting in Spain, about people with whom he lay side by side in ambushes or laid mines under fascist trains. Nevsky admired: "What kind of people!" The Military Council of the Southern Front allowed former soldiers of the Spanish Republican Army to be enrolled in our battalions. Domingo's fighters gathered in the auditorium of the Institute of Chemical Technology, hearing about this, embraced, some wiped away tears, and Domingo, not knowing how to express his feelings, clapped and clapped me on the shoulder. Together with the Soviet sappers, the Spanish comrades were engaged in mining the most critical and complex objects until the last day of the defense of Kharkov. And I again bow low to them now, many years later - both to those who are alive and to those who died defending freedom and justice. In the twentieth of October, fighting was already going on in the outskirts of the city. The cozy mansions on Ivanova Street, on Basseynaya Street, on other streets, in other lanes, were empty. How to make the fascist authorities choose not these mansions as their residence, but a mined mansion on Dzerzhinsky Street? The military council approved the decision to imitate the mining of the best houses. Starting from October 19, a pickup truck with miners, which became familiar to the population, drove openly to the mansions during the day. Miners carefully took out boxes with "explosives", fiddled around inside the buildings for a long time, got out, and drove on. Within three days, Yastrebov, Leonov, Lyadov and other bombers drove around more than ten houses. On the morning of October 24, the secretary of the city party committee, V. M. Churaev, together with me and Yastrebov, drove up for the last time to house number 17 on Dzerzhinsky Street. The gates are closed, there is no one behind the fence. Schleger jumped over the fence and opened the gate. We entered the house, walked around the rooms, visited the boiler room. Great! The impression is that the inhabitants of the house have just left it in a hurry. From Dzerzhinsky Street we went to Rudnev Square. We stopped on a bridge prepared for destruction, Churaev got out of the car, stood by the iron fence, stroked the cold railings ... The Nazis broke into the city. Before their eyes, miners, including Spanish volunteers, mined the highway to Belgorod. On the main highway Kharkov - Chuguev, special groups of miners were waiting for the last troops to pass in order to